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2009 will be 22nd year for Lilly Endowment's Teacher Creativity Fellowship Program

Nearly 130 Indiana teachers will have real stories to tell this fall when their students ask, "What did you do this summer?" The Hoosier teachers popped up all over the world this summer – from Uganda to the Arctic – doing projects they have always wanted to do. Until they received a Teacher Creativity Fellowship, however, they haven't had the funds or the time to do so.

They went to extreme-sports camps in Romania, took dance lessons on Broadway, constructed handcrafted art books, went fly-fishing in Montana, took broadcasting classes in Los Angeles, learned woodcarving and blacksmithing, studied piano in the Czech Republic and Austria, wrote and recorded rock songs, and learned to make Islamic tiles.

The opportunities that these teachers enjoyed can be replicated next year by recipients of the Lilly Endowment-funded 2009 Teacher Creativity Fellowship Program. Begun in 1987, the program offers Indiana teachers, principals, guidance counselors and media specialists the opportunity to become reenergized, follow their dreams and return with new spirits to their classrooms.

The 2009 Teacher Creativity Fellowship Program will offer up to 120 awards of \$8,000 each for K-12 licensed teachers, principals and assistant principals, guidance counselors and librarians/media specialists to support creative projects that will take place during six weeks next summer.

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A second level of funding is available for “distinguished fellows.” These grants offer up to \$25,000 per individual and will support projects that will improve teachers’ work with students by enhancing their knowledge and rekindling their dedication to the teaching profession.

If the distinguished fellow will need to leave the classroom or school for a period of time to engage in these projects, the Endowment may award additional funding up to \$25,000 directly to the teacher’s district to cover all or part of the costs of a replacement teacher. The Endowment will approve up to 10 distinguished fellow awards to teachers and up to 10 grants to school districts. Grant activities may take place anytime between June 1, 2009, and Aug. 31, 2010.

For those receiving the \$8,000 fellowships, their six-week project must be completed by Aug. 31, 2009, but the grant period will run through May 31, 2010, so that recipients will be able to report how the grant activities have influenced their work in the classroom.

“The best teachers know that learning never ends,” said Sara B. Cobb, Endowment vice president for education. “These teachers are curious. They are articulate and enthusiastic. They are eager to share.

“We have teachers return and tell us the fellowship was a ‘life-changing experience’ and the ‘biggest adventure of my life.’ We are constantly amazed and gratified by the enthusiasm these teachers bring to these projects, the lessons they learn and the people they meet. The excitement they bring back to the students in their classrooms is contagious,” Cobb added.

“The Endowment believes that engaged K-12 educators help produce engaged students, and this popular program has certainly validated this belief.”

All applicants must have at least three years of professional experience to be eligible for this competitive program. Also, former Teacher Creativity fellows who received their award before 2002 are eligible to apply for a second award in the 2009 program.

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Applications for either level of the Teacher Creativity Fellowship Program must be postmarked by Nov. 7. Notification of grant awards will be made by Feb. 27, 2009; grant payments will be made after March 15.

For specific questions about the program, application procedures or grant-writing tips, please contact the Endowment by e-mail, info@teachercreativity.org, or consult the Endowment's Web site, www.lillyendowment.org and click on Education, then on Teacher Creativity.