

Cunningham, Wright qualify for American Royal



Louisburg Middle School seventh-grader Lakin Cunningham (above) has already had quite the rodeo career and that continued as she, and fellow LMS student Delaney Wright, were recently selected to participate in the American Royal Invitational Youth Rodeo.

The American Royal is one of the oldest and largest professional rodeos in the Midwest.

Every fall, people flock to Kansas City, Mo., to compete against some of the best the nation has to offer. As it turns out, two Louisburg Middle School students will be right in the thick of it.

LMS seventh-grader Lakin Cunningham and sixth-grader Delaney Wright qualified for the American Royal Invitational Youth Rodeo in Hale Arena. Both girls will compete in barrel racing and goat-tying.

This is the fifth time Cunningham has qualified for the American Royal Invitational and this is Wright's first. The girls will take to the arena on Sept. 25 for the competition.

"I am super excited that I get to compete again this year in barrel racing and goat-tying," Cunningham said. "It's been one

of the highlights of my year each year since I've been 8. I'm striving for a top three finish in my events this year."

Wright and Cunningham each submitted applications of their achievements to the American Royal and both received good news.

"I'm so excited about having a chance to compete at the American Royal Youth Rodeo," Wright said. "I know I have been to a lot of rodeos but this is a step up in my career of rodeoing because I was selected by application to compete against some very tough competition."



LMS sixth-grader Delaney Wright earned a spot in her first American Royal Invitational Youth Rodeo.

Cunningham is no stranger to the rodeo as she has a lengthy list of accomplishments on her resume. Most recently, she was named as the 2016 National Little Britches Rodeo Association Princess.

Not only will she be competing in her two events, she will be helping with school agriculture tours before the rodeos begin. Cunningham will also carry in the American Flag during the Grand Entry portions of the rodeo each day and will be signing autographs as part of her duties of being the NLBRA Princess.

Cunningham was the Kansas Junior High School Rodeo Association

Reserve Champion Goat Tier in 2015 and also earned her NLBRA buckle in Barrel Racing. She is a four-time Christian Youth Rodeo Association Barrel Racing Champion, three-time Goat Tying Champion and two-time All-Around Cowgirl and Pole Bending Champion.

She is also a two-time National Barrel Horse Association Kansas Pee Wee 1D Barrel Racing Champion.

Cunningham has competed in barrel races since she was 3 years old and been in youth rodeos since she was 6. Lakin is the daughter of Kara Cunningham and is the granddaughter of Jim and Sandy Lowe of Louisburg.

"I'm also excited that this year I'll be representing the National Little Britches Rodeo Association as its Princess at the American Royal," Lakin said. "I am so glad that I get to carry the American flag and greet the kids as they come in for the tours from all different schools in the area. I look forward to seeing everyone and would like to wish everyone that is competing good luck."

Wright is also racking up accomplishments of her own. In 2013 and 2014, she was an All-Around Reserve champion during her competition in the Midwest Barrel Riders Association (MBRA).

She is also a two-time reserve champion in poles and barrels and was a champion goat-tier in 2013 and 2014 as well. Currently, Wright is in the middle of her third season rodeoing and is currently in the running for All-Around Champion Cowgirl in the Eastern Kansas Timed Event Circuit.

Delaney is the daughter of Andy and Amy Wright of Louisburg.

"I love doing rodeos because it is a sport where you have to rely on a 1,000 pound teammate that doesn't speak the same language in order to win," Wright said. "I'm so lucky to have awesome horses and have so many people support me and helping me reach my dreams in this tough sport."