Debate team wins first league title in 20 years



Louisburg debaters (from left) Zach Waite, Lexi Shaner, Riley George and Grayson Anderson pose with their first place Frontier League medals following their Oct. 31 victory at De Soto High School. The Wildcats won their first league title in 20 years.

While several people were getting dressed up for Halloween or preparing for spooky parties, the Louisburg High School debate team found a treat of its own.

The Wildcat team traveled to De Soto on Oct. 31 for the Frontier League Tournament and left with one of their biggest victories in recent seasons. Louisburg sent its three seniors Zach Waite, Riley George, Lexi Shaner and sophomore Grayson Anderson to compete and came away with the school's first league title in 20 years.

"When we heard Louisburg get called for the title we were definitely all in shock," George said. "There were a lot of really good teams that we had to go up against and none of us really knew what to expect, but it was a great feeling to get to experience with my team."

The league tournament ran a round robin format to help the

team prepare for the regional and state tournaments. Each school has a team that debates strictly on the affirmative side and another team on the negative.

Shaner and Waite debated on the affirmative side, while George and Anderson competed on the negative. Each side then faces the opposite from other league schools.

“The toughest part of the competition was it being my first four speaker competition,” Shaner said. “We saw some pretty tough teams and managed to only lose one. Zach and I were so proud of ourselves. We worked hard for this.

“Last year was my first year, and I have improved greatly. And so has Zach and Riley. But Grayson, the sophomore on our team, means so much to me. She was my first debate partner, and I am so upset that this is my last year with her. Also me being sick didn’t really help, but we made it through and won the league tournament.”

After five rounds were complete, the Wildcat quartet came out on top with a 7-3 record. Louisburg edged Paola, which finished with a 6-4 record, for first place and its first league title since 1995.

“Heading into the league tournament, you just never know what to expect,” Louisburg coach Brian Weilert said. “The judging pool is a mix of the schools who are actually competing in the tournament. Due to the tournament falling on Halloween, I didn’t have a ton of interest from students in signing up. I told the students to go ahead and put their name down if they wanted to be considered and from that short list, and I chose my three seniors and Grayson.

“I really wanted to give the seniors a chance to win the title. To come out on top was a nice end to the day and I was very happy for them. The Frontier League has a lot of talented programs so I was proud of their accomplishment.”

The debate squad will now focus back up and get ready for Saturday’s home tournament, which will help get it ready for the regional and state tournaments in the coming weeks.

“Winning with my senior teammates was pretty cool because we only have three this year,” Waite said. “I was very excited about being a part of the league title, but as cool as it is we still have work to do for regionals and state.”

The week before league, the Wildcat team split to take part in tournaments at Blue Valley North and Fort Scott. At Blue Valley North, the Wildcats didn’t leave with a medal but the duo of Carson Tappan and Curran Conklin came close with a 4-1 record and just missed the quarterfinals.

At Fort Scott, Louisburg finished second overall behind 4-1 records from the duo of Mikayla Quinn and Grayson Anderson and Lexi Shaner and Kris Light.

On Oct. 10, the Wildcats came up with another sweepstakes championship. Brooke Talmage and Garrett Mills, who competed up a division, along with Zach Waite and Calvin Cassida each got medals to lead the way. Novice teams Peyton Shaffer and Leia Shaffer, along with Reilly Alexander and Lilly Mick, also contributed to the win.