

Tappan, Conklin win state debate title



Louisburg's (from left) Carson Tappan, debate coach Brian Weilert and Curran Conklin pose with their Class 4A 2-speaker state debate championship trophy following the state tournament Saturday at Independence High School. Tappan and Conklin finished 11-0 on the day as they defeated Bishop Miege in a 2-1 decision in the final round.

Photos courtesy of Michelle Holtzen

INDEPENDENCE, Kan. – After 11 rounds and 17 hours of debate over two days, Carson Tappan and Curran Conklin didn't have a lot more left to give.

But around 10 p.m. Saturday, all that hard work paid off for the Louisburg High School duo.

During the Class 4A 2-speaker state debate tournament at Independence High School, Tappan and Conklin were awarded their first state championship after finishing with an 11-0 record.

"We were super excited once we got some sleep and realized what had happened," Tappan said. "We didn't expect to even place, let alone go undefeated and get first."

They weren't the only Louisburg team to come home with some hardware.

Sophomores Isabelle Holtzen and Grayson Anderson found themselves among the final four teams as well. Despite a close split-decision loss in the semifinals, Holtzen and Anderson finished third to win their first state trophy..

"The competition at state is tough," Holtzen said. "There are 72 of the best teams in Kansas participating. We debated 15 hours over the course of 2 days until we finally finished with third. It was a very surreal moment, I am just so thankful to (Coach Brian) Weilert for helping me get this far. He's a great teacher and I know we would not have been able to accomplish what we did this season without him."



Sophomores Isabelle Holtzen (left) and Grayson Anderson pose with their Class 4A third-place state trophy Saturday in Independence.

Weilert was equally pleased with his group of four teams that made the trip to Independence. The team of Garrett Mills and Lexi Shaner, along with Skylar Keaton and Mikayla Quinn, also competed for the Wildcats.

Mills and Shaner knocked off the No. 10 seed to advance to the round of 16, before losing a close 2-1 decision. Keaton and Quinn missed out on advancing to the double octofinals on a tiebreaker.

"This tournament has become so massive over the past few years that navigating it with all the variables in play such as judging and matchups is a tough go," Weilert said. "Kansas debate is so competitive that there are no easy rounds and with the exception of Carson, who has been debating for three years, the rest of the team has had two or less years of debate under their belts. To have this group do as well as they did made me very proud."

Although Tappan and Conklin made their way through the tournament with 11 wins, it wasn't always so easy and part of it had nothing to do with the tournament.

Tappan woke up under the weather on Saturday morning and didn't have a lot of energy. Add to the fact that he lost his voice in the final two rounds, made it an even sweeter victory – one the duo didn't think was possible.

"Going into the tournament we really had no expectation of taking first," Conklin said. "We knew we would do well but we didn't figure we would do that well. Initially, when we won, it hadn't really hit that we won. The excitement didn't come until a few minutes after when Carson turned to me and said, 'Hey, we just won state!'

"The toughest part of the tournament was knowing that every team you hit would get progressively better, and still having to remain in a good mental state."

One of those teams was Tonganoxie, and following the quarterfinal match between the two schools, Tappan thought his day was done.

"Our quarterfinal round was definitely the hardest round,"

Tappan said. "We beat Tonganoxie 3-0 but it felt like we lost 0-3. Luckily the judges bought our arguments. The competition varied in regular rounds, but in bracket play it definitely ramped up."

That included the championship round where Tappan and Conklin squared off with a team from Bishop Miege. The Wildcat squad was awarded a 2-1 decision and the state championship.

Holtzen and Anderson were one win away from squaring off with their teammates for the state crown. They faced the same Bishop Miege team in the semifinals before losing the split decision.

Although what made the run through state tournament special for the Louisburg sophomores was the fact they had never competed together.

"She's a great friend, so I knew her well but we just hadn't had a chance to work together," Holtzen said of Anderson. "We hoped to do well but weren't really sure what to expect."

Anderson was equally excited about the opportunity.

"Isabelle and I were stoked about our run at state and we were extremely proud of our team," Anderson said. "When we started preparing for the tournament, we decided that our goal would be to make it to outounds and go from there."

"I was super proud to be on the Louisburg debate team. Our team had a fabulous showing at state. I am so thankful to be a part of it and I am thankful that we have Mr. Weilert as a coach. I am so grateful that I got a chance to debate at state and I am incredibly thankful that I had Isabelle as a partner."

With all the success the Wildcat team experienced last weekend, the best still may be yet to come.

"It was amazing to see another team, Grayson and Isabelle,

place as well,” Conklin said. “They contributed so much to that tournament it was a shame we couldn’t have shared the title. Both girls are second year debaters with myself and it is great to see such potential coming out of Louisburg. From what I hear, next year’s freshmen will bring a lot to the table and I look forward to seeing what happens.”

Louisburg FFA shines at nationals



Members of the Louisburg High School FFA who competed at nationals are (front row, from left) Kaitlyn Gaza, Ellie Katzer, Abigail Tucker, Megan Roy, Paige Buffington, Bryn O’Meara; (back row) Megan Eberhart, Gracie Key, Morgan Strumillo, Holly Turner and Madelynn Yalowitz.

The Louisburg High School Future Farmers of America (FFA) chapter ventured its way to Louisville, Ky., in the final week of October for the 88th National FFA Convention and Expo to compete against some of the nation’s top agriculture teams.

As it turned out, Louisburg more than held its own.

Louisburg sent its three state championship teams from last spring to compete at the convention and they came home with a lot of hardware to show for it – including its first individual national champion.

Junior Madelynn Yalowitz made Louisburg history as she won the individual national title in Food Science and Technology. Yalowitz, along with Paige Buffington, Bryn O'Meara and Holly Turner, also finished runner-up in the team standings.

The Nursery and Landscape and Floriculture teams also ended its competition strong. Megan Roy, Sara Guetterman, Gracie Key and Morgan Strumillo finished third in the Nursery and Landscape Career Development Event (CDE).

Abigail Tucker, Ellie Katzer, Kaitlyn Gaza and Megan Eberhart came in 13th in the Floriculture CDE.



(From left) Bryn O'Meara, Madelynn Yalowitz, Paige Buffington and Holly Turner pose with their National FFA Gold Team Award in Food Science and Technology.

"I am really proud of these students," Louisburg adviser Jim Morgan said. "They worked really hard. We spent many hours during the summer, after school and on weekends studying the material. They all set the goal to reach the gold division and

they accomplished that goal.”

A goal of an individual national championship wasn’t even on Yalowitz’s radar. She racked up a score of 174 to win by eight points, as she edged out one of her own teammates for the honor.



(From left) Megan Roy, Gracie Key and Morgan Strumillo pose with their National FFA Gold Team Award in Nursery and Landscape.

Buffington was second in the nation with 166 points and O’Meara came in fifth with 156.5. The three competitors also earned gold emblems, while Turner finished with a bronze emblem.

“I felt pretty confident going in but I wasn’t’ thinking about getting first at all,” Yalowitz said. “I just wanted to get in the gold division. Then when they called my name and told me I won it was just a shock. It was definitely an awesome feeling though.

“As a team, I think we surprised ourselves by how well we did. It was nice to see that all that hard work and studying really paid off.”

The Food Science and Technology CDE had the team participate

in a timed product development project and each individual participated in practicums involving food sensory, safety, sanitation and a written exam.

"We did tons of tests, about two binders full, that we did the months between state and nationals to prepare," Yalowitz said. "We did a lot of practice team activities where we made a food product and do every aspect of it. We practiced aromas, we did taste tests and triangle tests. It was a lot of work."

Roy, the president of the Louisburg FFA chapter, led the Nursery and Landscape team with a sixth-place overall finish with 507 points. Roy, Guetterman, Key and Strumillo all earned gold emblems.

In the team standings, Louisburg racked up 1,663.4 points to take third place and also finished in the gold division.

The Nursery and Landscape CDE had teams complete a general knowledge exam testing horticultural principles and each participant had to complete practicums involving six different areas.

"We did really well," Roy said. "We did a lot better than we expected to, that is for sure. It was a lot fun."



(From left) Megan Eberhart, Ellie Katzer, Abigail Tucker and Kaitlyn Gaza pose with their National FFA Gold Team

Award in the Floriculture division.

"It was a lot easier transferring for Floriculture to Nursery because a lot of the plants overlap. We identified plants and trees constantly. To prepare, we made several trips to Suburban Lawn and Garden, Grass Pad and we learned how to lay sod. We also had to identify plants that we go on certain landscapes, so it was pretty tough."

In the Floriculture CDE, Tucker, Katzer, Gaza and Eberhart recorded 4,056 points to come in 13th and finished in the gold division. Individually, Tucker and Katzer each came away with gold embers, while Gaza and Eberhart received silver emblems.

"We took a lot of practice tests," Tucker said. "We had a list of 124 plants that we had to ID and then math problem solving and that wasn't fun. We studied plant disorders and we had to prepare for all sorts of different things in the competition because we didn't know how it was going to go. Over the summer we went to Johnson County Community College and took a short course on floral design and that helped a lot."

Students from all three teams put in a lot of work since their state title last year. Some of the students put in more than 350 hours of work over the summer and into the school year preparing for nationals.

"It was definitely a lot of work, and it involved a lot of studying, even at the convention," Tucker said. "I didn't like it much at the time, but looking back it was so worth it. I am so glad I did it and I had a great time."

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.

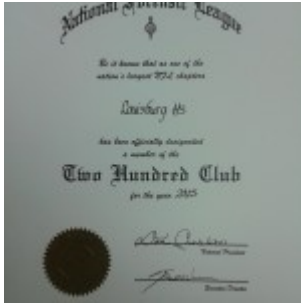
"Winning with my senior teammates was pretty cool because we only have three this year," Waite said. "I was very excited about being a part of the league title, but as cool as it is we still have work to do for regionals and state."

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.

LHS debate team earns national honor



The Louisburg High School debate team has had its fair share of success over the last several years and the Wildcats have seen their numbers grow because of it.

Thanks to all that success, Louisburg recently saw a big honor come its way.

The Louisburg debate and forensics team was just recognized by the National Speech and Debate Association for reaching a milestone of 200 degrees. Degrees are earned by participation and success at competition of team members from each school.

With more than 8,100 membership schools throughout the country, the points earned by the Wildcats puts them in the top 7.5 percent, head coach Brian Weilert said.

The award was one of many positives to come out of the debate program in the last week as the Wildcats found some success at two tournaments last weekend. Louisburg traveled to Blue Valley West and Olathe Northwest for competition and put together some strong showings.

Louisburg's top performance came thanks to Reilly Alexander and Lilly Mick. The Wildcat duo posted an undefeated record to win the novice division at Blue Valley West.

"Lilly and I were both very proud to be able to say we went undefeated," Alexander said. "We were overjoyed and very proud.

"The toughest thing during a debate tournament is probably trying your best to stay positive even when you've just lost the round you got out of. Also after the first two rounds you

get power matched, which means you go against better teams.”

Jacinda Collins and Bryce Kuhlman also placed for Louisburg during the Blue Valley West tournament. Kuhlman bumped up to the junior varsity division from novice and he, and Collins, finished fifth overall.

At the Olathe Northwest tournament, Mikayla Quinn and Isabelle Holtzen put together a 4-1 record in the junior varsity division, which put them into the out-rounds as the No. 2 seed. They were later upset by the No. 7 seed, but still went on to finish in fourth place.

In a team full of young debaters, the Wildcats are excited for what the rest of the season has in store.

“Overall I think this year’s debate team will do very well and go to state,” Alexander said. “We have a lot of freshmen that are eager to get better and excel, which makes the team fresh with new ideas.”

Debaters win sweepstakes at Independence



Members of the Louisburg High School debate team pose with their sweepstakes trophy following their victory in Independence on Saturday. The Wildcats also sent a team to

Gardner where they place third overall.

The Louisburg High School debate team divided and conquered once again last weekend as the Wildcats sent teams to two different tournaments.

As it turned out, both had a lot of success.

Louisburg traveled to Independence on Saturday and dominated the competition with a 17-3 record. With that, the Wildcats won the overall sweepstakes title to cap off their impressive day.

The Wildcats also racked up a number of wins during the all-novice Gardner-Edgerton Invitational. Louisburg left with the third-place sweepstakes trophy and did it with a lot of newcomers.

"We continue to get better as the year moves along," Louisburg coach Brian Weilert said. "After just two weeks, we have won over 100 rounds of debate, placed as a team at three tournaments and had 55 of 56 students compete and earn at least one victory.

"I always want top-to-bottom success. If just a few are doing well, you may look good in the paper, but learning isn't taking place for others on the team and that to me is not having success."



Members of the LHS novice debate team pose with their third-place trophy following last Saturday's competition in Gardner

At Independence, the Wildcats had two teams finish in the top four and another with just one loss. The duo of Janae Kuhlman and Skylar Keaton led the way with a 5-0 record and took third place overall.

Lexi Shaner and Grayson Anderson ended their day with a 4-1 record and finished fourth. The team of Carson Tappan and Mikayla Quinn also had a strong day with a 4-1 mark.

The Wildcats also fared well on the novice side. Noah Hill and Brooke Talmage put together a 4-1 mark to finish sixth, while Harley Olson and Demi Vanmeerhaeghe came away with a 4-1 mark as well.

At Gardner, 12 of the 14 debaters saw their first action of the season and the top three teams helped Louisburg to the third-place finish. All the debaters came away with victories, but Bryce Kuhlman and Jonathan Ventre led the way with a 3-1 record to finish sixth overall.

LHS debaters have busy first weekend



The Louisburg High School debate team had a busy start to its season as the Wildcats competed in two tournaments last weekend.

Wildcat head coach Brian Weilert divided his teams up and sent his more experienced group north to the Washburn Rural tournament in Topeka, while the rest of his team traveled south to Coffeyville in a tournament that saw three different divisions.

Washburn Rural is the top tournament to kick off the season as it draws the best debate programs from the state trying to compete for DCI (Debate Coach Invitational) bids.

"I always like to take my top teams to this two-day tournament to see where we stack up," Weilert said. "Many of the competitors are coming from long summer camps and have a distinct advantage. Getting wins there are tough but the experience pays dividends later on in the year."

At the top varsity (DCI) division, Carson Tappan and Ashley Allen, in their first experience at speed-debate, came away with a couple of wins against Manhattan but failed to pick up a DCI bid.

In the open division (traditional style varsity debate), sophomores Isabelle Holtzen and Skylar Keaton just missed the quarterfinals, ending with a 4-2 record. Zach Waite and Curran Conklin also made the trip, losing three close split-ballots, to finish 2-4.

The Wildcats found a lot of success in Coffeyville as they were able to come away with a second place sweepstakes finish. The open debate partners Lexi Shaner and Nathaniel Mason finished fifth overall.

The junior varsity debaters (2 or fewer years of experience) placed as well. Parker Perentis and Flynn Lagner's 4-1 record placed fifth, while novice debaters Elijah Brown and Garrett Mills bumped up a division in their very first tournament to also go 4-1 and medaled fourth.

In the novice division (1st year only) Louisburg finished with four placers. Hallie Hutsell and Clara Casebeer led the charge with a 5-0 record and just missed out on first place (speaker points tie-breaker) and came in second.

They were followed by Noah Hill/ Brooke Talmage (4-1) who finished third, Harley Olson/Demi Vanmeerhaeghe (4-1) who came in fifth and Sydney Vanmeerhaeghe/Julianne Finley (4-1) who finished sixth overall. Peyton Shaffer/Camdyn Clark (4-1) earned honorable mention honors.

The other competing novices Tanner Belcher/ Beckett Rasmussen and Jonathan Ventre/Leia Shaffer also had winning 3-2 records.

"It really is *entering the unknown* for them and to see nerves and fear from the start of the day turn to confidence and pride by the end of the day is something I never get tired of," Weilert said. "We are a very young team with no four-year debaters and just a few with three years of experience so we will grow as the year progresses.

"Between the two tournaments we won over 50 rounds of debate

and I think that is something we can build upon. We have 56 on the team this year and with budget cutbacks we were not able to allow everyone out who wanted to compete opening weekend, but a few of them made the long trip to Coffeyville to watch and learn. I am really proud of everyone that went out."

Meet your 2015 Fall Homecoming Candidates



The 2015 Louisburg High School fall homecoming candidates are (front row, from left) Ben Brummel, Alex Dunn, Anders Vance, Megan Lemke; (back row) Cate Stambaugh, Maddie Holloway, Emily Ventre and Parker Cates.

Homecoming week at Louisburg High School kicked off Monday and events are in full swing. With something going on every day this week, it will be a busy time for students and faculty alike. All of it is of course centered around the crowning of the 2015 fall king and queen. Eight students were selected as nominees and here are their names and profiles.

The crowning will take place at 6:30 p.m., on Friday at Wildcat Stadium before the start of the Louisburg and Paola

football game.



Megan Lemke

Megan is the daughter of Mike and Teresa Lemke. She has been involved in volleyball, basketball and track for 4 years; Letterman's Club for 3 years; Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD) for 2 years; and Leos club for 1 year. Megan plans to attend Kansas State University and is currently undecided on a major.



Parker Cates

Parker is the son of Kenneth and Beth Cates. He has been involved in soccer, wrestling, musical, Student Advisory Council, drumline and band for 4 years; Student Council and track for 2 years; and Jazz Band for 1 year. After graduation, Parker plans to go on a mission for the LDS Church and then will attend Brigham Young University and major in Business Administration or Political Science, followed by service in the Peace Corps.



Cate Stambaugh

Cate is the daughter of Jim and Dara Stambaugh. Cate has been involved in volleyball for 4 years; Letterman's Club for 3 years; Student's Against Destructive Decisions and FFA for 2 years; and softball, Leos Club, Spanish Club, and Debate for 1 year. Cate plans to continue her education at Kansas State University and major in Engineering or Marketing.



Ben Brummel

Ben is the son of Michael and Melissa Brummel. He has participated in musical, band, and select choir for 4 years; track for 3 years; cross country and forensics for 2 years; and National Honor Society, Leo's Club, and Student's Against Destructive Decisions for 1 year. Ben plans to attend Kansas State University.



Emily Ventre

Emily is the daughter of Jon and Brandi Ventre. She has been involved in forensics for 4 years; volleyball for 2 years; and Leo's Club, Spanish Club, LHS Pawprint and TSA for 1 year.

Emily plans to major in photography or photojournalism in college.



Anders Vance

Anders is the son of Robert and Alicia Vance. He has participated in football for 4 years; and wrestling, track, Student Council, Letterman's Club, and musical for 3 years. Anders plans to participate in football and major in Biomedics in college and then continue his education in medical school.



Maddie Holloway

Maddie is the daughter of Mark and Michelle Holloway. She has

been involved in cheerleading for 4 years; Letterman's Club for 3 years; yearbook for 2 years; and forensics for 1 year. Maddie plans to cheer at the University of Kansas or Wichita State University and major in journalism and mass communications with a minor in graphic design.



Alex Dunn

Alex is the son of Don and Janie Dunn. Alex has participated in football and FFA for 4 years; baseball for 3 years; Select Choir and basketball for 2 years; and band and musical for 1 year. Alex either plans to attend Pittsburg State University or a 2 year university for welding opportunities.

Leukemia battle gives Tyson chance to know hero



Louisburg High School senior Christopher Tyson poses with a picture of his great-grandfather Kenneth Virgin at the Punchbowl National Cemetery in Hawaii where his grandfather's name is honored at a memorial. Tyson is currently battling leukemia and was given a Make-A-Wish opportunity. He chose to go to Pearl Harbor where he got to see his grandfather's name for himself.

In 2013, Christopher Tyson sat down to write about his hero – a man he had never met.

It was for a school project, and a pretty big one actually. Christopher, then a sophomore at Louisburg High School, was charged by band director John Cisetti to write a paper about a veteran in his family as the band prepared to travel to New York City to march in the annual Memorial Day parade.

Christopher's great-grandfather, Kenneth Virgin, was one of 34 sailors that was killed on the USS Colhoun during the battle for Okinawa in World War II. He heard stories about his grandfather from his mother, Rhonda.

No doubt, the paper took Christopher back in time wondering what it was like to serve in the military at a time filled with tension and loss of life. It was hard for him to fathom what his great grandfather went through.

Christopher finished his project, traveled with the LHS Marching Band and did his best to honor him by playing his

trombone through the streets of New York City.

Less than a year later, Christopher would go through a battle of his own. It was one that didn't involve war, guns or conflict.

It was a personal battle – for his life.

GOD'S GOT THIS

At the beginning of his junior year, Christopher joined the rest of his Louisburg High School cross country teammates for a little running.

The season was just getting underway with the first day of practice, and right away Christopher could tell something wasn't right.

"I went for two miles and I could just feel the pulse pounding inside my head and I was just exhausted the whole time," he said.

The next day, the same thing happened.

On the third day, he ran with Wildcat coach John Reece, and pretty quickly Reece realized something wasn't right.

"I didn't notice anything at first with Christopher because it was very hot and everybody was struggling," Reece said. "The thing that I noticed was him not finishing the workout. When I talked to him he told me he had been sick with the flu while visiting family.

"I mentioned to his mom that his skin color was off and that it might not hurt to have a doctor check him out again since he had just gotten over the flu."

That afternoon, Rhonda and Christopher went to a walk-in clinic in Paola and the doctors didn't notice much. They drew

some of his blood and told them they would give them a call in a day or two when the results came back.

It turned out to be a lot shorter than that.

"We went to Walmart and weren't there for 15 minutes before we got a call back from the doctor and said that he was anemic and all three of his blood counts were low," Rhonda said. "He really wanted us to go see a doctor at Children's Mercy the next day. He told us not to let Christopher do anything."

The Tysons eventually made their way up to Children's Mercy and got the result no child or parent wants to hear – it was cancer. More specifically, Christopher was diagnosed with pre-B-cell leukemia, which is a cancer of the bone marrow and blood.

If there was any good news in the diagnosis it was that doctors told the family his pre-B-cell numbers were the best of anyone they have ever seen and it was the earliest they had ever caught it.

After talking with the doctors and telling her of the diagnosis, Rhonda looked at her son, who was lying the hospital bed joking around after having a bone marrow pull done – not exactly the reaction most people have after an invasive procedure is done.

She looked at him and asked how he was doing.

"Mom, God's got this," Christopher told her.

"I hope so Christopher," Rhonda said. "Because my world is just spinning right now."

It was spinning enough that Rhonda and her husband Roger didn't bother to tell Christopher of his diagnosis, on accident, of course. The two figured the doctors had told him of the news.

“He said he didn’t find out about it till the next day when he overheard us talking to the doctors about it,” Rhonda said. “I felt pretty small as a parent when he told me. I just assumed that when he said ‘God’s got this’ that he knew what God had.”

Through it all, Christopher wasn’t worried much. He had faith, knowing that God would get him through this one way or another.

His faith was tested right away.

BEATING CANCER

Shortly after being diagnosed with leukemia, Christopher aggressively began chemotherapy treatments.

Every Friday, he made his way up to Children’s Mercy for chemo and would spend days in the hospital over the next few months. It wasn’t long before he started feeling the effects.

After returning home from a treatment one day, Christopher couldn’t move the whole left side of his body.

“We thought he was having a stroke,” Rhonda said.

By the time they got back up to the hospital, Christopher couldn’t move at all. His father, Roger, pulled him out of the car and carried him into the hospital.

As Christopher lay in the hospital bed, there wasn’t much Rhonda could do so she went home with her daughter.

“I went home later that night and I just prayed and asked God how we were going to take care of him,” Rhonda said. “I was just so scared. Then I go back up about six hours later and I see him walking in the hallway with the nurse. That was a miracle as far as I was concerned because I know the kind of shape he was in when I left.

Doctors took an MRI and found a white spot in the middle of his brain. It wasn't a stroke, but Christopher was suffering from methotrexate toxicity. He was allergic to methotrexate they were giving him during chemotherapy treatments.

They gave him medicine to help counteract some of the reactions, one of which was over-the-counter Delsym cough medicine, of all things.

The treatments continued and so did the reactions. Even with all that, Christopher wasn't about to miss one of the highlights of his year – the LHS Marching Band Electric Light Show.

"I really enjoy marching band and the sports I am in," Christopher said. "I just wanted to get back out there."

Just a little more than a month after the diagnosis, Christopher put on his marching band outfit, laced with lights and tried to get back to some form of normalcy. The chemo would wear on him, however.

He had a lumbar puncture the day before his performance and suffered from a major headache that made it difficult to even stand up.

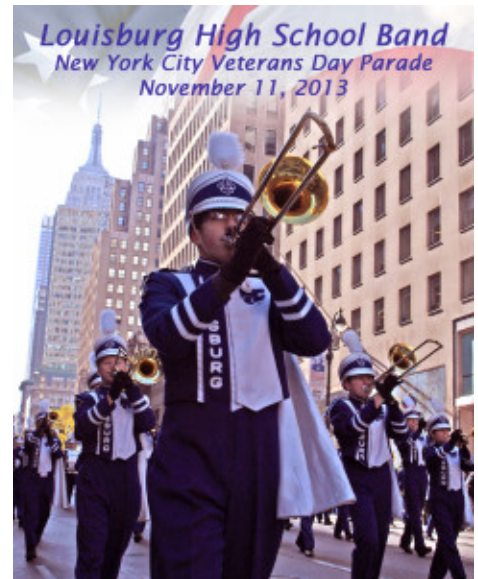
"He was laying down in the truck and when they were ready to go in, he went out and did his thing," Rhonda said. "Then he came back and laid down in the truck again as we were trying to get all the lights off him."

It was enough to raise the eyebrows of his band teacher.

"I did not expect Christopher to be there that night, but I was not surprised because I know that Christopher is dedicated beyond belief," Cisetti said. "He has a keen sense of loyalty to the group and goes the extra mile for his classmates."

Christopher also made an appearance at the Wildcats' home cross country meet in October. He watched as his team ran with

orange ribbons on their uniform in honor of his fight against leukemia.



Christopher Tyson made the cover of the LHS Marching Band book as they marched through New York City in the Labor Day Parade back in 2013.

"Christopher is an awesome kid," Reece said. "He is a hard worker both in and out of school. While he was going through the first stages of treatment, he was often more worried about school than what he was going through.

"He wanted to be back in school with his peers and be as close to normal as he could be. His body worked hard to put his leukemia in to remission. He is a warrior and he put his faith in God to help him get through this difficult time."

He had plenty of classmates and teachers to help him get through the difficult times. Early on, Cisetti brought a little present to cheer him up – something from that special day in New York City.

"I told the band parents on our photography committee that I wanted a good picture of one of our band students marching in front of a famous landmark," Cisetti said. "As it turned out, Christopher is the one they got in a picture in front of the Empire State Building. When I made the souvenir trip book, that picture went on the front. The books arrived from the publisher the same week that Christopher got sick. When I visited him in the hospital, I took him the very first copy."

The book brought back a lot of great memories for Christopher, one of which was of his great grandfather.

MAKE-A-WISH

While in the hospital, Christopher was told he would be granted a wish through the Make-A-Wish Foundation.

The foundation provides sick children with the opportunity to go somewhere with their family, meet a famous athlete or celebrity or anything a child would want to do.

They told Christopher to start thinking about where he would want to go. It didn't take him long to answer.

"Pearl Harbor," he said.

Everyone's eyes perked up.

"He told them he wanted to go to Pearl Harbor and not Hawaii, which puts a whole different spin on it," Roger said.

He wasn't thinking about the sunny skies, the blue ocean or the sandy beaches, Christopher was thinking about one thing – his great-grandfather. He wanted to go see his grandfather's name that is engraved on the wall at Punchbowl National Cemetery, which is a tribute to the soldiers killed in the 20th century wars.

Christopher was eventually granted his wish as it was revealed following a service at their church in Olathe. The Make-A-Wish foundation provided him, his parents and a sister the opportunity to spend a week in Hawaii.

The only problem was Christopher had two sisters, so the church raised money for both of his sisters, Ashley and Emily, to go and the whole family took off for Hawaii in late July.

It was a memorable trip for the entire Tyson clan.

Their hotel was right on Waikiki Beach, and their room on the top floor of the Sheraton featured views from two balconies and had multiple flat-screen televisions.



Christopher Tyson stands next to the USS Bowfin during his tour of Pearl Harbor.

“We didn’t turn those on once,” Rhonda said.

After doing some touring of the islands, they made their way to Pearl Harbor where they toured the USS Arizona memorial and then took a tour of the USS Bowfin, Christopher’s favorite spot, before finishing up with the USS Missouri.

“We were able to go into the captain’s cabin, barber shop and the brig and those were some of the spots that people usually

don't get to go to," Christopher said of the Missouri. "It was a pretty awesome."

A couple days later, the family finally made their way to Punchbowl National Cemetery and Christopher was on the lookout for his grandfather's name. It was like looking for a needle in the haystack with the thousands of soldiers honored at the memorial.

With the help of a guide, he finally spotted it.

"Virgin, Kenneth D, Fireman IC, USNR, Kansas"

Christopher took out a piece of paper and rubbed the etching as keepsake to take back with him. As it turned out, finding his grandfather's name was just the beginning of a very special day.

Earlier in the day, the Tysons were informed they were invited to attend the disinterment of five coffins from four grave sites. It was a military exhumation process to help identify the remains of soldiers killed aboard the USS Oklahoma during the Pearl Harbor bombing of 1941.



Christopher Tyson (middle) stands with members of the

military during the disinterment ceremony at Punchbowl National Cemetery.

As a part of the ceremony, Christopher was asked to be a part of the honors platoon. He stood next to a 2-star general and a member of the Pentagon.

"It was just really amazing to be a part of something like that," Christopher said.

When their day was coming to a close, Christopher got one more surprise. He was presented with the American flag that flew over Punchbowl on the day of their visit and was put in a frame.

The day capped what was an amazing getaway from their normal life that was filled with worries of leukemia and chemotherapy.

"The people with the Make-A-Wish Foundation are just amazing," Rhonda said. "They, along with all the sponsors that help kids get to experience these wonderful things is just awesome. For a lot of these kids, their wishes are just a light for them to look at what sometimes is at the end of a very long tunnel."

For Christopher, that light is getting brighter every day.

Getting back to normal

The Tyson family received good news a month after Christopher's diagnosis. All the chemotherapy he received was paying off as they eliminated 99.9 percent of the cancer.

Christopher will now be in maintenance for the next two years to make sure all of the cancer is gone. Currently, he goes in for chemo once a month and takes medication.

He will also have to go in for yearly checkups the rest of his

life. However, Christopher and his family are more than thrilled with the result thanks to some divine help.

“Anything can happen,” Rhonda said. “But you just have to put your faith and trust in God and hold on.”

It was a wild ride that came full circle. It started as a homework assignment for a trip to New York City and ended in Hawaii – the place where Christopher got to see where his grandfather, his hero, was honored.

Sandwiched in the middle, Christopher found out a lot about himself and his faith in God. Through all the hardships, he admitted he never wavered.

“God’s got this,” Christopher said. “He always has.”

Opinion: Rough patch leads to new beginning



I am just going to come right out and say it, “I’m scared.”

Yeah, it is an unusual way to start out an opinion piece, but there is no two ways around it – I am petrified. But believe it or not, it is what keeps me going.

We have all had at least one point in our existence where our lives changed for better or worse. I have had more than a few

of those in my life, but the latest one came on Jan. 9.

It started out like all the other Fridays over the last seven years. I reported to work, spent a few hours in the office getting ready for what was a busy weekend of prep coverage ahead. It was the first action after Christmas break and I was ready to get back into the swing of things.

That never took place.

My bosses came into my office early that afternoon to inform me I was being let go. The job of covering Louisburg athletics was no longer mine. I packed up my things, turned in my key, went home, punched the wall a couple times and cried.

I was scared.

After all the tears came the questions. How was I going to support my family? What am I going to do for a job? The list went on and on and I couldn't come up with many answers.

As it turned out, one of the worst experiences of my life turned into one of the best.

Thanks to a lot of prayers, and support from family and friends, I decided to start Louisburg Sports Zone. Yep, that's right, I went from being unemployed to starting my own business for the first time in my life.

Not exactly the best way to alleviate fears.

However, when I kicked off the site just a month later, I was overwhelmed with the amount of support from students at Louisburg High School, employees throughout the district, parents and several others who offered encouragement and supported my new venture.

I finished the last half of the winter season and all of the spring doing what I took for granted the previous seven years. I got the chance to cover Louisburg athletics again.

You know, this whole starting your own business thing might not have been a bad idea after all. I would have never had the courage to go out on my own had I not been pushed in that direction.

Fast forward to the present and I am still alive and kicking, ready to start my eighth season of roaming the Wildcat sidelines with camera in hand, waiting to tell that next story.

This fall brings a lot of story lines to the Wildcat programs. The football team is looking to improve off its 3-win season a year ago and find its way back to the playoffs with a veteran group returning.

Volleyball is primed and ready to make its fourth consecutive state tournament this year after placing in the top four in the last three years. The Lady Cats return five seniors that have a lot of state experience and that bodes well for another trip to Salina.

The Wildcat soccer team returns an experienced group from a year ago as they try to crack the top of the Frontier League standings. The cross country team also has several returning runners who will try and qualify for the state meet.

There is a lot to be excited about when it comes to Louisburg sports, but for me personally, I am just fortunate enough to still be a part of it in a small way.

I take a lot of pride in what I do and I hope that it shows when you read stories or look at pictures on this site. I started this business knowing that I will never be rich, but it gives me an opportunity to continue to do what I love.

Thanks to all those who have supported me and for the more than 23,000 views on the site in the last six months. I have said it before, but I am extremely blessed to live in a community that supports each other through good times and bad.

Every day I am fortunate enough to be able to go to work and support my family doing what I know how to do. That is all I have ever wanted, so thank you Louisburg for allowing me to do it.

I am still scared, though.

It is that fear that drives me to do the best I can in what I do in my job and in life. I don't want what happened on that day in January to happen again and I will do everything to make sure it doesn't.

Right now I am living the good life. I have the opportunity to work for myself, support my family and do what I enjoy. I can't ask for any more.

I am living the American dream.

I just don't want to wake up.

LHS marching band puts in work at camp



Photos courtesy of John Cisetti

Daniel Bell (foreground) and several other members of the Louisburg High School marching band performs a number during its week-long camp last week that was capped off Friday

with a performance for their parents.

The Louisburg High School marching band spent a week working and preparing for what is a long season of competitions and performances.

Those Wildcat band members got a lot accomplished.

In just a few short days, the Wildcats memorized nine songs, prepared for the upcoming Labor Day Parade, worked on the pregame show for home football games, worked on music and marching fundamentals, established leadership and fit everyone in new uniforms.

It is a lot to ask for students on summer break, but the Louisburg band came through with shining colors.

“I’m pleased to report that we accomplished all our goals and performed on the field for parents last Friday night,” LHS band instructor John Cisetti said. “Our kids have a great work ethic and are determined to succeed.”

Succeed they did and no one took a day off.



The Louisburg High School marching band makes it way

past the high school during its annual camp last week.

The Louisburg band features 139 students this coming year and everyone was in attendance for the six days that concluded a performance for their parents Friday evening.

"They represent more than one-fourth of the LHS student body," Cisetti said. "The band is huge."

Along with Cisetti, the Wildcats appear in good hands with their three drum majors this season. Spencer Rogers, Parker Cates and Ben Brummel have had a good summer as well as the three attended drum major camp at Platte County High School and walked away with the Grand Champion trophy.

The Wildcats have also put in a lot of time working on their program for this year. "On Broadway" will be the theme and features music from four Broadway shows, including "The Phantom of the Opera," "Wicked," "Hairspray," and "Les Miserables."



The band spent part of its week fitting themselves for new uniforms.

“Our theme this year was chosen by the students,” Cisetti said. “The challenge is blending all of these different styles into a unified show. The variety makes it very interesting.”

Another big change for the band is its wardrobe. New uniforms were ordered for everyone thanks to \$71,727 received from USD 416’s Capital Outlay Fund last year that allowed them to purchase 150 uniforms.

The new uniforms will display a purple jacket, black pants and a black plume. ‘Louisburg’ and a white ‘L’ is featured on the front of the jacket.

The band used their previous uniforms for the last 16 years and Cisetti can tell the excitement the new threads have brought to his students.

“You can see the pride on their faces when they see themselves in the mirror wearing new uniforms,” he said. “They don’t want to take them off.”

Louisburg also has a big season ahead of itself with several performances. The Wildcats will perform in the annual Louisburg Labor Day Parade, all home football games and two marching festivals.

On Oct. 14, they will compete in the Baker University Marching Festival and will also perform at the Central State Marching Festival at Kansas State University on Oct. 24.