

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.

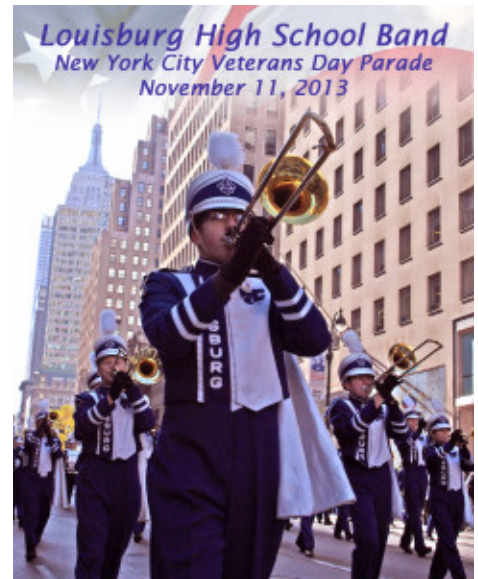
"He was laying down in the truck and when they were ready to go in, he went out and did his thing," Rhonda said. "Then he came back and laid down in the truck again as we were trying to get all the lights off him."

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.