

LHS cheer shines at NCA camp, earns bid to nationals



The Louisburg High School cheerleading team poses with their awards following the NCA camp in Overland Park in late June. Members of the team are (front row, from left) Leia Shaffer, Shaylor Whitham, Addie Katzer, Billie Casebeer, Kaitlyn Lewer, Hallie Hutsell; (middle row) coach Dana Shaffer, an NCA camp buddy, Lexi Pena, Brooklyn Mitchell, Lauren Vincent, Gabby Tappan, Ashlyn McManigal; (back row) Cecilia Bindi, Sammy McDaniel, Anna Morrison, Jadyn Amren, Lacie Kallevig, Andrea Gaza, Brielle White, Jayden Trester, Eleanor Willming.

School isn't even in session yet, but the Louisburg High School cheerleading team is already off to a great start to its 2018-19 season.

The Wildcat cheerleaders competed at the National Cheerleading Association (NCA) camp at the Overland Park Convention Center from June 26-28 and brought home a handful of awards. The three-day camp saw 14 teams and more than 300 cheerleaders compete for awards and a spot in the high school nationals.

Louisburg was able to get both.

The LHS cheer squad earned the Superior Blue Ribbon in Band Dance, Cheer and Chant. The Wildcats also earned the spirit stick all three days, along with All-Around Team Best Band Dance on the final day of camp.

More importantly, Louisburg earned a bid to the NCA High School National Championship competition in late January 2019 in Dallas, Texas.

“We couldn’t have done any better at camp,” Louisburg coach Dana Shaffer said. “These girls amazed me and made Louisburg proud. The girls really shined bright this year and as a coach I think this is going to be our year.”

Louisburg also earned the Herkie Award all three days, which is the highest award a team can receive for sportsmanship. The award is voted on by the campers and staff.

“All the awards we received are amazing, but the one that makes me smile the most is the Herkie Award,” Shaffer said. “There is only one of those given at camp and we earned that honor.”

Several cheerleaders also earned individual honors. Leia Shaffer, Billie Casebeer, Ashlyn McManigal and Hallie Hutsell were selected to the All-American Team.

“At an NCA camp you have to be nominated to try out and we had six girls nominated in Leia Shaffer, Billie Casebeer, Ashlyn McManigal, Kaitlyn Lewer, Jayden Trester and Hallie Hutsell,” coach Shaffer said. “Leia, Billie, Ashlyn and Hallie made the All-American Team. Fifty girls at the camp were nominated and 17 made it and four of them are from Louisburg. The all-americans can choose to attend several events in the future.”

Members of the Wildcat team that competed are Leia Shaffer, Shaylor Whitham, Addie Katzer, Billie Casebeer, Kaitlyn Lewer, Hallie Hutsell, Lexi Pena, Brooklyn Mitchell, Lauren Vincent, Gabby Tappan, Ashlyn McManigal, Cecilia Bindi, Sammy McDaniel, Anna Morrison, Jadyn Amren, Lacie Kallevig, Andrea Gaza, Brielle White, Jayden Trester and Eleanor Willming.

Now, the Wildcat cheerleaders are focused on the upcoming season and the national competition in about six months. They

are excited for what the future holds.

“We are really looking forward to NCA Nationals,” coach Shaffer said. “We are ready to compete and looking forward to the challenge.”

Harding breaks, matches Wildcat weightlifting records



Louisburg’s Dalton Harding recently tied the all-time bench press record at Louisburg High School with a press of 365 pounds, and also broke the one for his 185-pound weight class that was 25 years old.

Dalton Harding walked into the weight room on his final day at Louisburg High School and was going to give it one more try.

It was one more attempt at a record he had spent countless hours working toward. One more attempt at a shot of leaving his mark at the school.

Since he was a sophomore, Harding had wanted an opportunity to at least match the school’s bench press record. Just a week prior, he had come up five pounds short of the 365-pound goal.

“I was just so disappointed when I tried it the week before

and it was getting in my head that maybe I won't be able to get it," Harding said. "I worked for almost three years to get that."

So, he laid down on the bench, gathered himself and put his hands on the bar. Harding got one more chance at the record – a chance that was three years in the making.

With spotters on each side of him, and weightlifting coach Ty Pfannenstiel looking on, Harding lifted all 365 pounds up in the air and then back down again.

The record was his – well, sort of.

His 365-pound bench press tied the school record for all weight classes, which was set by Joe Nieman in 2004, but Nieman was in the 250-plus weight division – more than 65 pounds heavier than Harding.

A week earlier Harding broke Richie Wrigley's old record of 350 pounds in the 185-pound weight class that was set back in 1993.

"I was so happy," Harding said. "I got 360 the week before and I just couldn't get the 365 and I came back and it was a lot easier that day. I'm not sure why...maybe I got more sleep or something. I'm just really glad to get my name up on that board."

The last three years have been difficult for Harding ever since an injury basically sidelined him from playing sports from his sophomore year on.

During the junior varsity football season in October of 2015, Harding played on the offensive line and suffered a major knee injury. He tore his ACL, part of his MCL and tore his meniscus in half.

Then after completing his therapy from that surgery, he tore his meniscus again the following May.

“It was really bad because the second tear was about two months after I was done with therapy,” Harding said. “Then I had surgery and started the whole process all over again. It wasn’t a fun time. At least I could walk after the second surgery because after the first surgery I was in a wheelchair for 8-9 weeks. I couldn’t really do anything.

“It just got to the point where I couldn’t walk anymore,” Harding said of his second tear. “Part of the meniscus actually would break into pieces and flop backwards. My leg would lock up at an angle too and we would have to force it back into place. There is about 40 percent of my meniscus left, and if I ever tear it again, it is a full knee replacement.”

It was a scary thought for a high school teenager who just wanted to play sports.

The fear of another knee injury pushed him away from football and Harding had to make a difficult decision at a young age.

“It was tough because football is like a brotherhood,” Harding said. “It is just a big family and that was hard. I got through it though. My favorite sport was baseball and that didn’t really work out either. I kept thinking about playing football my senior year, but I just decided it was too big of a risk. I don’t even lift legs anymore. I can do it for a couple days, but then it just kills me.”

So, with sports out of the question, Harding hit the weights even harder. He would work out at school, but did a lot of stuff at home with his father Dennis and brother Garrett.

His knee injury prevents him from using his legs a lot to lift, which is why he stick with the bench press.

“I use the workout program that my dad used when he was in school,” Dalton said. “He still has the sheets printed out and laminated at home and me and my brother still go by that. I

got the upper body part and my brother Garrett has tree trunk legs and he can leg press about 1,000 pounds. Weightlifting is just kind of in our blood.”

That 365-pound mark is also a special one as that is what his father Dennis bench pressed in college and he wanted to at least match his dad – if not break it in high school.

“I definitely want to beat him, for sure,” Dalton said. “My goal since I was young was to get over that, but to get 365 with everything I have gone through really means a lot to me. Then when I saw the records on the Louisburg boards, it gave me even more motivation to reach that. Hopefully my name will stay up there for quite a while.”

Although his days at Louisburg High School are now behind him, Harding isn’t planning on giving up weightlifting. Shortly, he will make his way to Beloit to become a diesel technician, but plans on increasing that bench press number as much as possible.

“There isn’t a whole lot to do in Beloit so I will have a lot of time to lift,” he said. “Hopefully in a year or so I can get up to 385.”

Smith signs with Hannibal-LaGrange for shotgun sports



Louisburg High School senior Will Smith signed his letter of intent with Hannibal-LaGrange University to participate in its shotgun sports program. Sitting next to Will is his stepmom Brenda Smith and father Bill Smith. Standing (from left) is his sister Mackinzee, Hannibal coach Nathan Hammock and his mother Jana Creekmore.

As his senior year was winding down, Will Smith wasn't sure what was ahead for him after high school.

With so many different options out there to try, Smith had trouble picking out the best path for him. As it turned out, his love for hunting took him to where he needed to go.

On May 8, in front of family and friends at Louisburg High School, Smith made his decision official as he signed his letter of intent to participate in shotgun sports at Hannibal-LaGrange University, an NAIA school based in Hannibal, Mo.

"Signing with Hannibal was a blessing for me," Smith said. "I'm going to be honest, I didn't really know where I was going to go for college till this opportunity arose. I am looking forward to the challenge."

The shotgun sports program is just in its third-year at Hannibal, but the Trojans have already had success as they recently finished 15th overall at the national tournament in Division 3.

Shotgun sports involves a lot of clay and trap shooting, and while Smith doesn't have a lot of experience with that yet, he

is looking forward to learning.

“I have hunted since I was a kid and I guess hunting that long has given me the skill to make the team,” Smith said. “I haven’t been working on this long, but I think I will enjoy it. I expect myself to succeed in things that I didn’t know I could.”

HGLU coach Nathan Hammock is looking forward to Smith joining the Trojan program.

“From the moment I met William I knew he would be a good fit for the HLGU Shotgun Team,” Hammock said. “One thing that impressed me immediately about William was how respectful he was in our conversations. He demonstrates responsibility both in school and in his work outside of school. He is new to the competitive side of shotgun, but brings a lot of experience from many years of waterfowl hunting. I look forward to seeing William grow as a competitive shooter this season.”

Smith plans to major in secondary education during his time at Hannibal.

LHS' Bila reels in fishing awards, wins state championship



Louisburg junior Brock Bila holds up the 8 pound, 3 ounce bass that he caught during the BASS Nation regional tournament in which he finished 14th overall and won the Kansas adult state championship.

When Brock Bila and his family made the move to Louisburg more than a year ago, he had just one request when they decided to leave their Overland Park home.

“I told my mom I wanted water right next to the house,” Bila said. “I wanted to be close to water so I could just take the boat and go fishing as much as I could. I just love it that much.”

One might consider that a selfish request, but for the Louisburg High School junior, it is one of necessity. You could say it is job-related.

Bila, who started fishing at age 5, has become one of the top high school fisherman in the state of Kansas. Two years ago, Bila was crowned the Fishing League Worldwide (FLW) state champion along with partner Thomas Heinen of Topek, at Milford Lake.

In 2017, he was runner-up in the BASS Nation state championship at Big Hill and he qualified for the National High School Fishing Championship on Kentucky Lake. Last September at Perry Lake, he was first at the BASS Nation High School team qualifier.

Most recently, Bila won his second FLW state championship last

March with Heinen on Wilson Lake. Bila and Heinen have been joined by boat captain Larry Brumley during their tournaments, and has given the two high schoolers much needed advice along the way.

“Winning my first state championship on the FLW side was a big moment for me,” Bila said. “It is still a big thing for me now, but it is a lot easier on the FLW side than BASS. I was runner-up in the BASS state championship last year at that put me in the national tournament at Kentucky Lake and that was a big accomplishment for me.”

Fishing has been a passion for Bila since he was young and it has only grown over time. He’s found himself competing against some of the nation’s best fishermen, including his stint in the national tournament in Kentucky.

“There were 260 boats and it was crazy to think how much money was there is just boats and trucks alone,” he said. “It was an amazing experience and it was probably one of my favorite times.”



Bila poses with his catch last September at the BASS high school team qualifier at Perry Lake, in which he finished first overall.

Bila is currently preparing for his trip to the FLW High School National Championship with Heinen in late June on Lake Pickwick in Florence, Ala. He and Heinen have become a force to be reckoned with on the lake as they have won several tournaments over the last few years.

Tournaments are harder work than people realize, according to Bila. There are several hours spent pre-fishing the lake and figuring out where the best spot are. Many of the tournaments take eight hours to determine a winner.

“The high school deal is pretty cool because you can join the

tournament series with anyone that is over 18, who is your captain or coach,” Bila said. “They run the boat with the big motor, then the trolling motor on the front the high school team has to run. You are allowed to have four timeouts throughout the day and you are allowed to ask your boat captain for advice. My partner is from Topeka and is a senior at Hayden. He is going to fish in college as well.”

Bila also earned a spot on the 2018 Kansas State Team, which is for adults (16-and-over) and is rare for someone that young to qualify. The team consists of the top 16 anglers in the state. Bila is the Kansas State Champion Co-Angler and will move on to fish in the national championships in December.

He finished 14th overall in the regional tournament at Toledo Bend Lake in Louisiana in March and led his Kansas team, which qualified him for the national tournament. Bila also picked the perfect time to catch his biggest bass to date – 8 pounds and 3 ounces.

“It is pretty unheard of for a kid coming in and doing that on his first time,” he said. “A lot of the guys have been doing this for a long time and these are the events that help you get to the Bassmaster Classic, which is like the Super Bowl of fishing. Then we went down there to pre-fish, and I didn’t catch over three pounds in practice. The first day, I was sitting 140th or something, then the second day I fished with a professional who has fished the Bassmaster Classic before and that is who I caught an 8-pounder with.

“I caught a whole bunch of big fish and had a 14-pound bag with three fish and was an awesome time. Then the third day I caught a couple more and ended up getting first in Kansas and 14th overall. That is when I made my actual first check in fishing.”

Some might consider catching fish to be fortunate at times,

but for Bila, it has taken years for him to hone his craft and it has involved a lot of research.

“When you are fishing, a lot people think it is just luck, but there are so many variables when it comes to fishing,” he said. “When you put the water temperature, the moon phases, the air pressure and water color all together – it is not luck. It is a lot of thinking. To see that all come together is pretty cool.

“My generation of fisherman are completely different from those who are probably eight years older than me. I learned everything online and by just doing it. I used online resources, having connections you can call and just spending time on the water figuring it out.”

All the success has landed Bila an opportunity to fish for Drury University following graduation and he is excited to be able to have a chance to compete for the Springfield, Mo., school. He also currently has two sponsors that provide him with baits and other items.

“I got an offer from Drury University to fish for them, so my plan is to go to college there and hopefully can try and take it professionally,” he said. ‘I was really excited about that cause it has Table Rock Lake and the Lake of the Ozarks right there.”

Bila currently has a web site, www.brockbilafishing.com, where you catch up on all his successes. He is also currently raising money for his trip to the high school national tournament in Alabama in June.

He is selling Chris Cakes pancake mix, and if you would like to support Bila is his cause, email him at brockbila@gmail.com.

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Barber excited to join Pittsburg State cheer squad



Louisburg senior Avery Barber (left) spent the last four years cheering for the Wildcats and now she is ready to continue her cheer career at Pittsburg State this fall.

While her friends were getting ready for their senior prom, Avery Barber found herself 90 miles away trying to calm her nerves as she prepped for what she hoped would be the start of something special.

Those nerves have since been replaced with a high level of anticipation.

Barber spent that April day trying out for the Pittsburg State University cheerleading team and she got the news she was hoping for – her cheer career is far from over.

The Louisburg senior was informed she will be one of 28 members of the Gorilla cheer squad for 2018-19 season. Barber will cheer on the Gorillas during the football and basketball seasons.

“All throughout high school, I figured it would end here,” Barber said of her cheer career. “Being a part of the squad and how much of a family we have become has been great to see. I think I have really grown as a cheerleader and I didn’t want to stop. I was really excited when I found out that I made it.”

The tryouts were an anxious time for Barber as she went up against some difficult competition and was asked to do different things than she was used to in high school.



Louisburg senior Avery Barber (top left) will cheer at all the Pitt State football and basketball games next season.

However, Barber quickly made some new friends that helped ease some of those nerves.

“Tryouts were really stressful,” Barber said. “We had to do a cheer and chant and the fight song and tumbling tryout. We did two stunts with someone I chose and someone they chose. I was nervous, but I stunted better than I expected and I just remembered everything that I learned from my last five years.

“I talk to the coaches a lot at open gyms about what I need to work on. I have gotten close with some of the cheerleaders there and they have helped me feel comfortable at the clinics. Once practice starts, it is all about me working hard to be a better cheerleader and better athlete too.”

Cheer has been a big part of Barber's life since the sixth grade when she joined the Louisburg FCCJC team, and then cheered two years in middle school before she joined the Wildcat team for all four years of high school.

The idea to move on to Pittsburg State was an easy one for her as she saw what the Gorilla team was accomplishing.

"I have been committed to going to Pitt since I was probably 5-years-old," she said. "Both my parents went there too, so it has always been a big part of my life. Also, Pitt State recently got third at nationals and that just pushed me toward wanting to be on that team."

It is that team aspect that has attracted Barber to continuing her cheer career and she is excited for the challenges that lie ahead.

"It is different in college because you don't do all-girl group stunts, you do partner stunting," Barber said. "Just practicing stunting with boys and working on tumbling is that is something that is required. It is not something I am used to, but I think I will enjoy it.

"I really just enjoy the team aspect of it and how you rely on everyone else to stay in the air, but not only that, but to inspire the crowd and watching the games as well. It is just one big family."

Wildcats bring home hardware from state powerlifting meet



Louisburg High School powerlifters (from left) Eli Minster, Brian Houck, Kiefer Tucker, Ben Minster, Tanner Belcher, Dylan Knipp, Avery Graham, Reilly Ratliff-Becher and Izzie Ford each set personal bests during the Class 4A state powerlifting meet March 10 at Clay Center High School.

It has been several years since Louisburg High School sent a team to a state powerlifting competition, but that all changed on March 10.

Led by weightlifting coach Ty Pfannenstiel, he took a group of nine LHS students to Clay Center High School for the 2018 Class 4A state powerlifting meet and the Wildcat lifters brought home a lot of hardware back with them.

Many of the competitors earned a medal, either in a specific event, or if they finished in the top three of their specific weight class.

Avery Graham, Reilly Ratliff-Becher, Izzie Ford, Dylan Knipp, Tanner Belcher, Eli Minster, Brian Houck, Ben Minster and Kiefer Tucker all made the trip to Clay Center and coach Pfannenstiel couldn't have asked for more from his first time group.

"I thought our kids did great," he said. "Every kid that we took finished in the top 10 in their respective weight class. The top three kids medal in each event and overall, so for us to come home with that many medals was really impressive. Even though not everyone brought home some hardware, each athlete had a personal record.

“This sport is a lot like track where you are pretty much competing against yourself to beat your previous best, so for our kids to set some PR’s in that kind of environment was very impressive. I was very proud of our athletes.”

Ratliff-Becher had a big day in the girls division as she medaled in all three of her individual events in the 180-pound weight class. The Louisburg sophomore took second in the bench press with 135 pounds.

She also had a 140-pound clean that was good for second and had a 240-pound squat that took third. She finished second overall with a total of 515 pounds.



Reilly Ratliff-Becher attempts a squat lift while she is spotted by teammate Izzie Ford during the Class 4A state meet.

Ford, a senior, was third overall in the same weight class as

she totaled 435 pounds. She also medaled third with a 105-pound bench.

Graham, a sophomore, totaled 435 pounds in the 148-pound weight class to take eighth overall.

On the boys side, Tucker had a big day as he brought home three medals. He totaled 1,030 pounds in the 220-pound weight class to finish third.

Tucker finished first with a 465-pound squat and also finished third in the bench press with a 315-pound attempt.

Knipp had a total lift of 755 pounds in the 148-pound class to take third overall. He also took first in the bench press with a lift of 245 pounds.



Junior Kiefer Tucker records an attempt in the bench

press after he finished third overall in his weight class.

Houck competed in the 181-pound division and brought home a pair of medals. He finished first with a 445-pound squat and his three events totaled 910 pounds, which was good for third overall.

Belcher earned a lone medal in the bench press with an attempt of 225 pounds at 148-pounds, which was good for third place. He took seventh overall with 690 total pounds.

Ben Minster (198 pounds) and Eli Minster (173 pounds) took seventh and 10th overall, respectively. Ben totaled 860 pounds to take seventh overall and Eli recorded 765 pounds to finish 10th.

“I think they all surprised me a little,” Pfannestiel said. “I knew we had a couple of kids that would do really well, but to see us have that many kids place was impressive. There were over 300 athletes at this meet, so for our nine athletes to perform that well was awesome.”

In the team standings, the Louisburg girls finished sixth overall with 14 points, while Basehor-Linwood won the state title with 97 points. McPherson finished second with 56 and Scott City was third with 47.

The Louisburg boys finished eighth overall with 18 points. Basehor-Linwood won the team title with 80 points, while Buhler was second (54) and Scott City was third (40).



Dylan Knipp attempts a squat lift on March 10 at Clay Center High School during the Class 4A meet. Knipp was third overall in his weight class.

Since this was their first time, Pfannenstiel and his athletes weren't sure what to expect from the state meet, but he is excited for the results and hopes he can take an even bigger group next year.

"This is not a KSHSAA sanctioned sport, so there is no qualification, regional, or sub state that takes place," Pfannenstiel said. "Anyone that is in high school is eligible. I just asked kids in class that I thought would be interested and they were all very receptive. I think a lot of kids were nervous to go because it sounds very intimidating. But I do

know that all nine athletes that went really enjoyed the experience. I was very proud of our kids. They represented Louisburg well.

“We will take more athletes next year. This is definitely a sport where strength in numbers is the key. If we can fill out all of the weight classes, I think we can finish in the top three next year. The kids really liked it, so I think they will help recruit some more kids and our numbers will grow.”

LHS cheer wraps up successful season



The Louisburg High School cheerleading team had a busy 2017-18 season and one that ended with an awarding finish at the Baldwin competition in February when the Wildcats earned grand champion honors.

The end of the winter sports campaign also marks the conclusion for the 2017-18 Louisburg High School cheerleading team as it will put away the pom-poms for a few months as the Wildcats begin looking toward next year.

This past season brought a lot of highs, and a few lows, for

the Wildcat program under first-year head coach Dana Shaffer.

One of the biggest moments for the LHS cheer squad came on Feb. 3 when it competed at the Baldwin Cheer Festival at Baldwin High School. The Wildcat group put on one of their best performances of the season as they earned a '1' rating, that included grand champion honors.

The 20 member Wildcat cheer team includes Jadyn Amren, Avery Barber, Olivia Barber, Cecilia Bindi, Billie Casebeer, Andrea Gaza, Hallie Hutsell, Bria Jensen, Addie Katzer, Kaitlyn Lewer, Ashlyn McManigal, Brooklyn Mitchell, Lexi Pena, Leia Shaffer, Ashley Stuteville, Gabby Tappan, Kaitlyn Urban, Lauren Vincent, Shaylor Whitham and Eleanor Willming.

Louisburg also finished first in dance, choreography and stunts in the competition that featured teams from approximately 20 area schools. What made the accomplishment even more impressive was the girls had just two weeks to perfect their routine.

"That was pretty amazing and the girls did a really great job," Shaffer said. "If you put something in front of them, no matter the time frame, they are going to get to work and they are going to do it well."

For the first time, the LHS cheer team also included a manager in Hannah Jones, who Shaffer relied on throughout the season.

"Hannah has been a great manager for us," Shaffer said. "Cheer has never had a manager before. She has gone to every game, every practice, gone to camp and I couldn't have done it without her."

Among the regular performances at football and basketball games, the team also made history in November when it traveled to Topeka to compete in the KSHSAA Inaugural Game Day Spirit Showcase.

Louisburg was one of 18 Class 4A programs to participate in the first-year event. The team was judged based on three categories: Band dance, fight song and crowd leading.

Like with any new competition, there were a few hiccups and one of them cost the Wildcats. Instead of being given a three-point deduction, the judges made a mistake and accidentally gave Louisburg a 13-point deduction that could not be rectified.

That cost the Wildcats a possible spot in the finals as they would have had a chance to battle it out for a state championship.

“It was overwhelming, just for the fact that we didn’t know what we were getting in to and everyone else thought the same because it was new for everyone,” Shaffer said. “We got kind of raked over the coals on our score. They recorded a lot of the scores by hand, and not electronically, so instead of deducting us by three points, we got a 13-point deduction. They admitted their fault and it was a learning experience for them too.

“If the score we were supposed to have gotten would have happened, we would have been in third position to go for first. It stings a little bit still, but with it being a first year I understand everyone is trying to work out the kinks. We will go back next year and are looking forward to doing even better.”

Coach Shaffer is already looking forward to next season for the Wildcat program with a few changes, along with hoping to make amends at the state competition.

One that is already in place in creation of the Cheer Cat-Backers, an parent-run organization to help raise money for the team.

“The parents have been great and they started the cheer

version of the Cat-Backers and we are going to do some fundraising for next year so we can afford to go to high school nationals," she said.

Another change could be the size of the group, along with the possibility of hosting their own competition.

"I don't think we are going to have as big of squad next year, because I would like to focus on a little smaller scale and nail it that way," she said. "That is just a preference though. Next year we will have a mascot, too.

"We will have a competition of our own, somewhat like the Baldwin one that we go to, and I think that will be a lot of fun. Hopefully it will be a great fundraising opportunity for us as well. We want to get up to the standards of bigger schools. Everyone knows who Louisburg is, but we don't have the funds that those other schools have and hopefully we can get there and have a chance to maybe attend nationals."

Final round helps Louisburg debate to third-place finish



The Louisburg High School 4-speaker debate team of (from left) Garrett Mills, Skylar Keaton, Isabelle Holtzen and Grayson Anderson pose with their third place state trophy on Jan. 13 following the state tournament in Coffeyville.

Skylar Keaton, Garrett Mills, Grayson Anderson and Isabelle Holtzen had about enough.

On the final day of the Class 4A state debate tournament on Jan. 13, the Louisburg quartet found themselves sitting in the lunch room of a Coffeyville elementary school, losing their patience, waiting to hear their fate after the final round of competition.

If the Wildcats had just one losing ballot in the final round, they could find themselves out of a state medal.

Then they look up to finally see their coach, Claire Haflich, walking towards them and it didn't look promising.

"We are sitting in the commons waiting for the results and we see (Haflich) come striding in to the room," Mills said. "I swear, whatever it was, she looked angry. She was irritated. She told us all to go outside."

"We all thought we lost," Anderson said.

Appearances were deceiving, however, as Haflich informed her team that they won both ballots in the final round, which gave them third-place state trophy.

Emotions were hard to hide as the Wildcats were able to bring home their first 4-speaker state debate trophy in several years.

"If we had dropped both rounds, we would have ended up in last," Keaton said. "The fact the tournament was so competitive this year, and that we were able to place, was very exciting. It was nice to give Haflich her first 4-speak trophy and it is nice to work with three other people instead of just one."

Louisburg finished the tournament with an 8-6 record, and

finished just two wins behind state champion, Piper, who ended with a 10-4 mark. Bishop Miege was second at 9-5.

It was a difficult competition for the Wildcats as they were part of an 8-team tournament that featured the best 4-speaker teams in the state. The tournament brought a lot of highs and lows that the Louisburg group had to battle through.

The Wildcats were able to come through in the final round as Mills and Keaton, who argued for the affirmative, and Anderson and Holtzen, who argued the negative, each won their final debate. Those victories pushed Louisburg over the top.

“It was the toughest competition that I had ever faced at one tournament,” Holtzen said. “I know when I go to a singular tournament, there could be a couple good teams there, but every team was challenging and they were all well-prepared for their arguments. It was really hard to find a hole in their case.”

All season long, debaters from across the state were to argue on the topic of education and the four Louisburg seniors did a lot of research from the beginning of the season. Early on, it was apparent to Halfich who her 4-speaker team was going to be.

“Three weeks into school, I let them know that they were going to be my 4-speak team,” Haflich said. “Although they didn’t start competing until much later, they really came together and the team did a lot research to help.

“It was incredibly broad topic and there were thousands of affirmative cases. You couldn’t have one theory you can use all year. Every judge wanted specific case evidence so they did an absurd amount of research.”

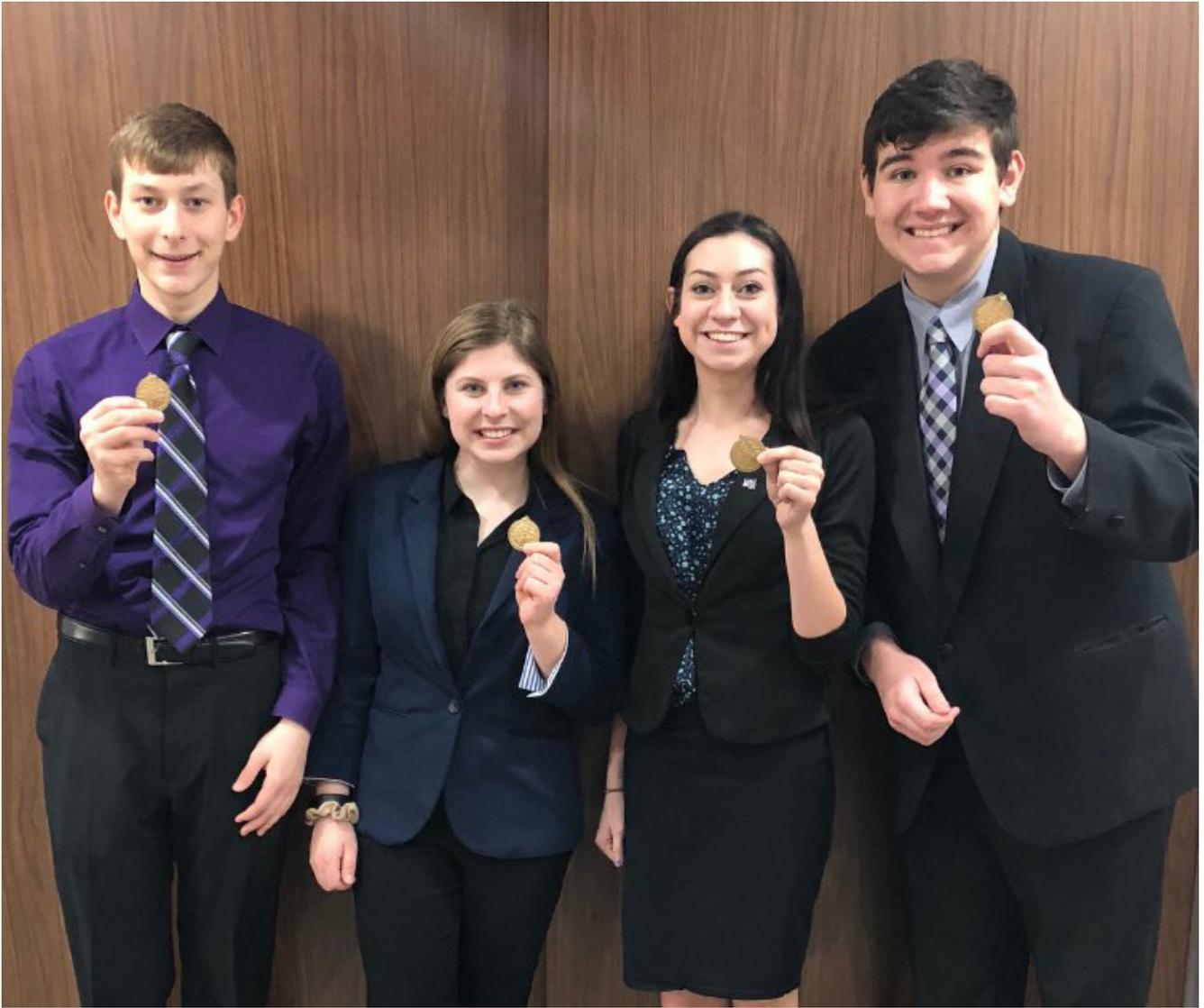
Before the holiday break, the 4-speaker team competed in their regional tournament and finished second overall to earn a spot at the state tournament. They had limited time to research

upon returning to school, and the weather made it even more difficult when the start of classes were postponed due to winter weather.

“State isn’t until after the semester has ended and I don’t have them in class anymore,” Haflich said. “They did a lot outside work. We ended up having a snow day at school, which was one of our last times to work together, so there was a lot of Skype practice debate rounds. I definitely pushed them and I think it paid off.”

This isn’t the first taste of success Louisburg has had in debate. The last two seasons, Anderson and Holtzen finished in third-place at state in the 2-speaker competition and that experience helped make this latest trophy possible.

“I have been honored to have Isabelle as my debate partner the last few years,” Anderson said. “It was also awesome to work with Garrett and Skylar and we really became a close team. It was really awesome to work with this group of people in my last season and it was an honor. I am so excited that this how we get to go out as this is the last debate tournament for a lot of us. We represented our school well, but also our abilities and school as well.”



Wyatt Axmann, Billie Casebeer, Janae Kuhlman and Jordan Shaner pose with their 2-speaker state medals.

It wasn't the only success the Louisburg team encountered at state. The teams of Billie Casebeer and Janae Kuhlman, along with Wyatt Axmann and Jordan Shaner, each finished among the top 16 2-speaker teams in the state and earned a medal.

The two day tournament was a long one as the 4-speaker team had to compete in three rounds the first day and four more on the second, which left them exhausted.

"You have that adrenaline rush going," Mills said. "You just have to get locked in and find a groove to make it through all the rounds. Our first day was pretty good and only lost one. We knew the really tough teams were on the second day, so we

knew it was going to be a lot tougher.”

Although the affirmative team of Mills and Keaton lost just one on the first day, Holtzen and Anderson hit a couple bumps in the road on the first day with two losses and they were there was going to be no room for error on the second.

“It was hard for us because we had lost a couple rounds Friday so we went in Saturday knowing we had to win so many rounds for each of us to even have a chance to place,” Anderson said. “We had extra pressure, but Isabelle and I had that our junior year too, so we weren’t strangers to it, but it wasn’t fun either. By the time the tournament was over, we were really tired, but all that stress and anxiety was there.”

All the hard work paid off as the Wildcats left the state tournament with another trophy and a place in Louisburg history.

“I was really excited to represent my school in debate one last time,” Holtzen said. “I know senior year is filled with so many lasts, so it was exciting to go out and leave an impact on our school and leave a mark behind on our last season.”

Meet the LHS 2018 Winter Homecoming Candidates



Members of the 2018 Louisburg High School winter homecoming court are (front row, from left): Grant Ryals, Scott Murphy, Kai Tinich, Mitchell Drew; (back row) Haven Trageser-Turner, Isabelle Holtzen, Alexa Goodspeed and Tomi Frederes.

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. All of it is, of course, centered around the crowning of the 2018 winter king and queen. Eight students were selected as nominees and here are their names and profiles.

The crowning will take place on Friday at halftime of the boys basketball game with Eudora. Tipoff for that game is set for approximately 7:30 p.m. Good luck to all the participants and make sure to come out on Friday to support the Wildcat girls and boys teams against the Cardinals.



Kai Tinich and Alexa Goodspeed

Kai Tinich

Kai is the son of Terry and Susan Tinich. He has been involved with student council for four years. Kai has participated in golf for three years, Leo's Club for three years, FCCLA for two years, FCA for two years, Spanish Club for two years and basketball for one year. After graduation, Kai plans to attend the University of Arkansas to study international business with a minor in Greek or Italian.

Alexa Goodspeed

Alexa is the daughter of Susan Goodspeed. She has participated in cross country for four years, FFA for four years, softball for two years, Spanish Club for two years. She was a basketball manager for one year and participated in Leo's Club

and choir for one year. After graduation, Alexa plans to attend Pittsburg State University and major in physiology.



Tomi Frederes and Mitchell Drew

Tomi Frederes

Tomi is the daughter Christy and Jerry Frederes. She has participated in FFA for four years, cross country and Leo's Club for three years, softball and Spanish Club for two years and track and volleyball for one year. After graduation, Tomi

plans to attend Pittsburg State University and major in business.

Mitchell Drew

Mitchell is the son of Pat and Shanna Drew. He has participated in baseball for four years and football for four years. After graduation, Mitchell plans to attend Pittsburg State University and pursue a bachelor degree in nursing.



Scott Murphy and Isabelle Holtzen

Scott Murphy

Scott is the son of Gene and Amanda Murphy. He has participated in soccer, band, stage crew, Model United Nations, student council, Scholars Bowl and Technology Student Association for four years. He has also taken part in track and Spanish Club for three years, Jazz Band for two years and National Honors Society, Math Club and Science Olympiad Club for one year. After graduation, Scott plans to attend Cornell University to study mechanical engineering.

Isabelle Holtzen

Isabelle is the daughter of Craig and Michelle Holtzen. She has participated in debate, basketball, cross country, track and Fellowship of Christian Athletes for four years. She has also taken part in choir for three years, National Honors Society and Model United Nations for two years and musical, Leo's Club and Student Advisory Council for one year. After graduation, Isabelle plans to attend the University of Northern Iowa to major in business and will pole vault for the track team.



Grant Ryals and Haven Trageser-Turner

Grant Ryals

Grant is the son of Janelle Ryals and Jason and Michelle Ryals. He has participated in soccer for four years, student council for three years, National Honors Society and girls soccer manager for two years, and Leo's Club and golf for one year. After graduation, Grant plans to attend William Jewell College to play soccer and major in biomedical engineering.

Haven Trageser-Turner

Haven is the daughter of Jeff and Katie Trageser and Courtney Turner. She has participate in FFA, student council and musical for four years, basketball and choir for three years, FCCLA for two years and softball, Leo's Club and Spanish Club for one year. After graduation, Haven plans to attend the University of Kansas and major in nursing.





OPINION: 2017 was a banner year for Louisburg



Having the opportunity to cover Louisburg High School athletics, for what has been almost 10 years now, I have seen a lot of different highs and lows.

I have been lucky enough to cover state championship teams and watched several athletes perform at the highest level. However, this last year has to be one for the record books when it comes to success at Louisburg High School.

For Wildcat athletics, 2017 was a banner year for many reasons.

Louisburg qualified for the state tournament in three different sports – volleyball, girls soccer and boys basketball – and the first two each placed in the top four.

The volleyball team was just a point away from winning the school's first state title after the Lady Cats finished second to defending state champion Rose Hill, and tied for the best finish in school history.

The Wildcat girls soccer team qualified for the state semifinals in just its second year of existence and suffered a heartbreaking 1-0 loss in the semifinals to eventually take fourth overall.

In boys basketball, the Wildcats qualified for the state tournament for the first time in 12 years despite getting knocked out in the first round by defending state champion Bishop Miege.

Most schools would love to have that success with their athletic programs, but for Louisburg, that was just the tip of the iceberg. As special as the seasons were for those three programs, the Wildcats also thrived in a few other sports.

Louisburg's cross country program, which has been around for 19 years, had the best season in its history – by far. Not only did the Wildcats have three state medalists for the first time ever, but it had a year that featured the school's first female league champion in Trinity Moore and the best league finish by a male, Wyatt Reece, who took second.

Tim Smith continued the Wildcat success as he became the school's first regional cross country champion, and Moore, Reece and Smith each went on to win a state medal. Moore and Smith also set school records for the fastest time.

The Wildcats also qualified the girls team for the first time in school history as Moore, Carlee Gassman, Reilly Alexander, Isabelle Holtzen, Kaitlyn Lewer, Payton Shaffer and Emily Williams took third at regionals and eventually 10th at state.

The Wildcat wrestling team tied a program best by qualifying eight for the state tournament and came back with a medal by Ryan Adams, who finished sixth.

Louisburg's track and field team persevered and qualified for state in 10 events and had two regional champions in Quinn Rigney and Chris Williams. Isabelle Holtzen and T.J. Dover each brought home their first state track medals.

The boys soccer team was one goal away from making its second consecutive trip to the state semifinals, but their run was halted by a loss to McPherson in state quarterfinals. Still,

the Wildcats won a regional title, which was the seventh in team history.

Freshman Calvin Dillon led the Wildcat golf team this past year and recorded the program's first state medal in more than decade as he took 10th overall.

All these things and more I described in detail when releasing my top 10 stories of the year and what a year it was.

Obviously, I haven't had a chance to look through all the results, but I can't imagine a more successful year for LHS when you are talking about athletics. There may have been years in the 70s, 80s and 90s that I don't know about, but I find it hard to imagine one that tops 2017.

Sure, the 2010-11 school year featured two state championship teams in football and boys track and field and that was a fantastic time to be Wildcat, but as far as calendar years go, 2017 was one to remember.

Even outside the sports world, Louisburg High School put together many great accomplishments as the Wildcat Marching Band was selected to participate in the Tournament of Roses Parade and put on a great show for the nation on New Year's Day.

Then in October, the FFA Food Science team of Hallie Hutsell, Faith Seuferling, Addie Katzer and Hattie Harris won a national championship, while Hutsell and Seuferling placed second and third in the nation, respectively.

I don't get a lot of opportunities to cover programs or groups outside the sports world, but these are fantastic accomplishments and deserved to be recognized.

For me, 2017 was a whirlwind. It seemed around every corner, school history was being made and there aren't many schools around the state that can boast about the successes Louisburg

has experienced.

It was an honor for me to cover many of these historic runs in Wildcat history and I hope you all realize how lucky you have it. Louisburg is a school filled with great coaches who care about the student athletes.

Believe me, I know how fortunate I am to be able to be a part of something special and this place is it. If 2018 is half of what 2017 was, it will be a fun ride.

I can't wait for what 2018 has in store and hopefully you all will follow along to see what these Wildcats can accomplish.