

Top 10 stories of 2015



Here are the Louisburg Sports Zone Top 10 Stories of the Year. In each brief explanation of the story, there will be a link to the full story of when the event actually happened. Thanks again for a successful 2015 and I am already looking forward to 2016.



Hogan Welch (left) and Wyatt Reece each qualified for state in their respective sports.

10. Welch and Reece qualify for state

LHS students Hogan Welch and Wyatt Reece each put together strong seasons in their respective sports.

In May, Welch qualified for the Class 4A state golf tournament after he shot an 85 at the Osawatomie Golf Course to become one of five individual qualifiers for state. It was the first time Welch had qualified for the state tournament and would shoot a 79 a week later in McPherson to finish 40th overall.

As for Reece, he qualified for the state cross country meet for the first time in his career in October. The Louisburg sophomore came in 13th overall and was also one of five individual qualifiers. A week later Reece traveled to Wamego to compete at the state meet and ran a 18:43 to come in 71st.



Louisburg's Jimmy Dolan (left) and Mya Diacono each suffered major head injuries from an accident just days apart. The Louisburg community rallied together to help the two families.

9. Accidents bring Louisburg community together

Jimmy Dolan and Mya Diacono live in the same community but were worlds apart from each other.

Jimmy, a junior at Louisburg High School, loves to wrestle, hang out with friends and live the life of a teenager.

It was a far cry from 9-year-old Mya who loves soccer, horses

and spending time with her fourth-grade friends at Broadmoor Elementary. In a town of less than 5,000 people, the two had never met.

Two tragic accidents changed all of that.

On Jan. 12, Jimmy lost control of his vehicle while driving to school and suffered a major brain injury. Just 42 days later, Mya was involved in an automobile accident just outside the Louisburg city limits that left her with the same severe brain trauma.

That was when the Louisburg community came together to help the two families cope with a burden no family should have to bear. Since then, both Jimmy and Mya are on the road to recovery thanks to the help of a lot of people.



Louisburg Soccer Club president Karin Olson (second from left), Louisburg High School junior Maddie McDaniel (middle) and fundraising organizer Diana Moore (right) receive the WIN for KC Sprint Teamwork Award on Feb. 13 in Kansas City, Mo.

8. Girls soccer raises funds to start program, wins award

A fundraising committee made a big push to make sure there was a girls soccer program at Louisburg High School.

The committee raised \$39,000 in almost a year's time to fund the program for three years. Thanks to all the hard work, the group was also recognized by the WIN for KC organization. The Lady Cats' soccer season will kickoff in late March.



Louisburg graduates Kody Cook (left) and Garrett Griffin are each winding down their careers with their respective Division I football programs.

7. Griffin, Cook wrap up college careers

Louisburg High School graduates Kody Cook and Garrett Griffin have lived the lives a lot of football fans could only hope for.

Both are wrapping up their Division I collegiate football careers and are doing it with a lot of success. Cook is living his dream with the Kansas State football team as he has made contributions at both the wide receiver and quarterback positions to help the Wildcats to the Liberty Bowl.

Griffin, on the other hand, battled through an injury-plagued

senior season to help Air Force reach the Armed Forces Bowl and made several big plays at the tight end spot.



Louisburg quarterback Austin Terry was one of several players responsible for the Wildcats' turnaround this season.

6. Wildcat football has big turnaround

After finishing with just three wins a year ago, the Louisburg High School football team put together a strong season in 2015 as they finished with seven wins.

Those seven victories put the Wildcats within a game of Paola for the Frontier League title and Louisburg also earned a spot in the regional playoffs before falling to Basehor-Linwood in a tight contest.



The Louisburg High School soccer team captured its first regional crown since 2010 after a 2-0 win over Coffeyville.

5. Louisburg soccer wins regional crown

Through much of the regular season, the Louisburg High School soccer team didn't have much to cheer about.

The Wildcats had just four wins during the regular season, but they seemed to find the right chemistry in the postseason. Louisburg rattled off three consecutive wins in the postseason, including a 2-0 victory over Coffeyville-Field Kindley in the regional championship.

It was the Wildcats' first regional title since 2010 and their sixth in the last 10 years.



Anders Vance won a regional title in the 285-pound weight class last February as he was one of five Wildcats to earn state bids.

4. Louisburg wrestling qualifies five for state

The Louisburg wrestling team hadn't been a part of the state tournament since 2012 – that is before last season.

The Wildcats put together a breakout season as they qualified five for the state tournament, while Anders Vance won the regional crown at 285 pounds. Brenton Wrigley (195 pounds), Mason Koechner (220), Nathan Keegan (113) and Ryan Adams (138) all made the trip to Salina for the Class 4A state tourney.



Jeff Lohse (left) and Ben York each stepped away from their head coaching posts in 2015.

3. Long-time coaches resign from post

Jeff Lohse and Ben York had been fixtures in their respective sports for Louisburg High School, but both decided to call it quits this year.

Lohse, who spent the last 17 years as the head coach for the LHS baseball team, stepped down from his spot in May, citing personal reasons. Lohse led the Wildcats to two state tournament appearances.

York, who was the head coach when the boys soccer program started, also cited personal reasons for leaving the Wildcat soccer program after 13 years. York helped the Wildcats to six regional titles in the last 10 years.



Connor McMullen won the state title in the discus back in May and became Louisburg's first track state champion since 2011.

2. McMullen wins state title in discus, Dennis medals in hurdles

Louisburg High School senior Connor McMullen finally got the state title in the discus he had been searching for.

McMullen recorded a throw of 173 feet, 1 inch on his final attempt to win the Class 4A state discus title in Wichita back in May. He would also medal eighth in the javelin with a toss of 164-02.

Fellow senior Sean Dennis also garnered a state medal as he took fourth in the 110-meter hurdles. The boys and girls team combined sent a total of 11 athletes to the state meet.



The Louisburg High School volleyball team finished third overall in 2015 after making it to state for the fifth time in the last six seasons.

1. Lady Cat volleyball takes third at state

The Louisburg High School volleyball team has made a habit of making the trip to Salina in recent years and this season was no exception.

This time, however, the Lady Cats finished with a victory.

After ending their season with a runner-up performance and two fourth-place finishes at state the last three years, Louisburg won its final match of the season in 2015 as it defeated Tonganoxie in the third-place match.

The Lady Cats qualified for the state tournament for the fifth time in the last six years.

Cross country team looks back on year



Members of the LHS boys cross country team (from left) Jarod Rose, Austin Raetzel, Spencer Rogers, Zach Minor, Eddie Murphy, Devyn Small, Wyatt Reece and assistant coach Arianne Seidl listen to head coach John Reece talk about the season during the team's banquet on Nov. 11.

The Louisburg High School cross country team came together one last time in 2015 to reminisce about a season that left a lot of lasting memories during the team's end of the season banquet on Nov. 11.

Whether it was the first girls team title in the program's history, or sophomore Wyatt Reece punching his ticket to the state cross country meet, the 2015 season had a lot of positives for this group of Wildcat runners.

"I think this was probably the tightest knit group of runners I have ever had here," Louisburg coach John Reece said. "They all worked extremely hard to improve their times and they truly cared about each other."

“We have had years where kids would just come out to get in shape for other sports, and that is great too, but all of these runners cared about the cross country team by the end of the season. That is so great to see and we have a good future ahead.”

During the banquet, coach Reece also announced some changes on the Wildcats’ list of top seven runners. Wyatt Reece cracked the list this season as he recorded the seventh-fastest time in program history with a time of 17 minutes and 59 seconds.

“I thought Wyatt had a great season,” coach Reece said. “As his coach and his father, I am so proud to see him crack this list. I know he is going to be even better these next two seasons so I am excited to see how far he can go.”

Also a big change this season was the girls team switching over from 4- to 5-kilometer races. Although the change wasn’t required until postseason competition, the Lady Cats competed on the 5K level in every race this season.

With that, Reece created a new record board for the girls 5K.

Sophomore Isabelle Holtzen is now the school’s record-holder in the 5K with a time of 21:43. Junior Madelynn Yalowitz is second in 22:37 and sophomore Savannah Reinhart was a second behind her in third in 22:38.

Junior Liz Hildreth (23:30), junior Kaitlyn Gaza (23:40), freshman Alex Miller (24:56) and senior Abby Bergman (25:27) rounded out the top seven spots on the list.

“I thought all these girls did a great job with the change and ran hard all year long,” coach Reece said. “We had some good times in there and hopefully with age we can get even better. These are a talented group of girls and they all improved throughout the year. I am excited to see what we can do as a team next year.”

To round everything out, coach Reece recognized his senior group that included Devyn Small, Zach Minor, Eddie Murphy, Michael Shaner and Spencer Rogers on the boys side, along with Abby Bergman, Cierra Rose, Maddie McDaniel and manager Katie Reece on the girls side.

“These seniors have all been great for our program and each of these runners have come a long way and have improved every year,” coach Reece said. “They were a great senior class to have and they will definitely be missed. They brought a lot to our team.”

Reece gets state cross country experience



Louisburg High School sophomore Wyatt Reece (right) competed in his first state cross country meet last Saturday in Wamego. Reece was 71st in 18:43 and learned a lot from his first meet.

WAMEGO – Before Wyatt Reece stepped up to the starting line, he was calm and collected for his first state cross country race.

Once he got to the line, everything seemed to change.

Nerves started to creep in as he wondered how it was all going to turn out. Once the gun went off, however, Reece put those aside and took off on the Wamego Country Club course.

When it was all said and done, Reece finished 71st overall out of 107 runners on Saturday with a time of 18 minutes and 43 seconds at the Class 4A state meet. It was a good first experience at state for the Louisburg High School sophomore.

“After the gun went off it was just another meet,” Wyatt said. “There were no nerves, just me, the course and my competitors. My race was ok, the first mile was very fast, probably the fastest of the year.

“The course is very difficult, there is no flats just ups and downs. The hardest part is all the sharp turns and the gradual up hills, one of the easiest hills for me were the steepest ones.”

He got good reviews from Louisburg coach John Reece, who also happens to be Wyatt’s father.

“It was awesome to watch him line up and compete at state,” coach Reece said. “It brought back memories of old when I ran at state. He ran a good race for the first time on a hard course. He was breaking down his race on the way home on where he felt he could have improved position or pushed harder. He is very critical of his races and processes through them.”

Now that his race is complete, Wyatt is looking forward to what is ahead – whether it is in cross country or the upcoming track season.

“Of course I give all the glory to God and hope that he will keep me moving forward through next year,” Wyatt said. “I want to go back to state next year and continue my high school running career at the high level it was this year.”

Coach Reece is a little anxious as well to see what his son can in his final two years of high school along with the rest of his team.

“He will take his experience from state and use it next year,” coach Reece said. “He is looking forward to track season and wants to qualify individually in an event as well as getting the 4x800 team back to state track.

“The cross country boys and girls teams had a great season and made great gains. The future could be very bright for our team.”

The Frontier League was also represented well as Spring Hill junior finished second in the individual race with a time of 16:18. Baldwin won the state championship with 47 points and De Soto was runner-up with 79 points.

On the girls’ side, Baldwin’s Addie Dick was fifth in 19:40 and the Bulldogs also won the state championship with 45 points.

Reece earns state cross country bid



Louisburg High School sophomore Wyatt Reece qualified for the state cross country meet Saturday when he finished 13th

overall at the Class 4A regional meet in Garnett. Reece will run at the state meet this Saturday in Wamego.

GARNETT – When Wyatt Reece opened the cross country season in early September, he did so at the Garnett Golf Course.

His result left him frustrated and a little disappointed.

So when Reece and the rest of the Louisburg High School team made their way back to Garnett on Saturday for the Class 4A regional race, the Wildcat sophomore wasn't sure what to expect.

Needless to say, his mood was a lot better once it was all over.

Reece qualified for the state meet as he finished 13th overall in the regional race with a time in 18 minutes and 16 seconds. The finish was good enough to become the fourth individual qualifier for state.

The top three teams qualify for the state meet in Wamego along with the top five other individuals not from those teams.

Happy was one way to describe Reece after the finish, but nothing matched the mood of his coach – and dad – John Reece.

“Honestly I was excited, but my dad was more excited,” Wyatt said. “I came into this year not knowing how it would end up, but about half way through the year that idea started to change. After my run at Wellsville everything started to line up. My time kept dropping or was consistent and all my races felt good.”

Wyatt put in a lot of work in practice with his coach, but also put in some extra time with his dad in order to be as

prepared as possible.

“Wyatt qualifying for state is unbelievable,” coach Reece said. “As a coach, I saw the potential early in the season and it was a matter of developing it. As a dad, I was there for moral support and our long runs on Sundays were spent talking about races, strategies and how proud I was of what he was accomplishing.”

The Louisburg sophomore put together a strong race from the start, stayed with the pack of the top 15 runners and saved his best for last.

“The race started off fast, almost too fast,” Wyatt said. “I came in at the mile around 14th and just stayed with the group I was with till about the two-and-a-half-mile mark. The end of a race is like my bread and butter. I can just let things go and run hard which I did. The finish is uphill for about 150 meters. There was some runners up ahead of me and I went for them.”

Wyatt was joined by two other runners on the Wildcat team as seniors Devyn Small and Eddie Murphy ran their final race for the Wildcats. Small came in 50th in 20:10 and Murphy was 74th in 22:02.

“They competed very well and ended their season with a positive experience,” coach Reece said. “I could not have asked for anything more and they did a great job for four years.”

Louisburg’s girls squad suffered a little heartbreak during their race as the Lady Cats’ top runner, Isabelle Holtzen, stumbled and fell about a mile into the race. Holtzen was in contention to take one of those individual spots for state, but wasn’t able to recover in time.

The Louisburg sophomore did run hard at the end and finished

the race in 35th place in 23:38.

Junior Madelynn Yalowitz led the Lady Cats in 29th overall with a time of 23:01. Fellow juniors Kaitlyn Gaza (24:15) and Liz Hildreth (24:26) came in 44th and 49th, respectively.

Freshman Alex Miller (55th), sophomore Lilly Mick (60th) and junior Mara Justesen (64th) rounded out the Lady Cat lineup. As a team, the Lady Cats came in seventh overall with 183 points.

“The girls team continued their strong season,” coach Reece said. “They all ran well to end the season and have definitely set the bar higher for next year. Isabelle did go down at about 1.3 miles and walked a bit then got going again to finish strong for the team even though she was not where she wanted to be. The girls race was very strong with individual runners.”

The season does continue for Wyatt as he prepares to run at the Class 4A state meet at 1:45 p.m. on Saturday at the Wamego Golf Course and he is looking forward to the challenge.

“Saturday at Wamego will be hard,” Wyatt said. “The course is tough, although I’ve never ran it before, but I’ve seen it. It’s my first time at state and I’m not looking to run my best time. During state track my dad told me ‘The first time at state you’re there for the experience, the second time for the medal, the third time for the podium.’ Am I looking for a good run? Of course, but am I looking to get a personal record? No.”

Holtzen, Reece run way to league honors



Isabelle Holtzen sprints toward the finish line during the Frontier League meet Thursday at Lewis-Young Park. Holtzen finished 15th overall to earn a league medal and honorable mention all-league honors.

Louisburg High School sophomores Isabelle Holtzen and Wyatt Reece picked a great time to run one of the best races of their short varsity careers.

During the Frontier League cross country meet Thursday, Holtzen and Reece ran with the league's best and picked up some honors in the process. The Wildcat duo each earned a top-20 finish, and with that, both were recognized with honorable mention all-league honors.

For the second week in a row, the Wildcats had the opportunity to run on their home course at Lewis-Young Park and Holtzen and Reece took advantage.

Holtzen came up big as she recorded a personal best time of 21 minutes and 43 seconds to finish 15th overall and secure the last medal spot. She sprinted with Spring Hill's Allison Kosberg to the finish line for 14th place, but Kosberg won by .01 seconds.

“Isabelle ran great,” Louisburg coach John Reece said. “I have always said if you go out and PR (personal record) good things happen and they did for her. She made moves when needed and her and the Spring Hill girl dueled it out to the end which got both of them medals.”

Wyatt Reece ran just short of his personal best time in the boys’ race, but he still ran an 18:03 to come in 19th overall and get all-league honors.



Wyatt Reece earned honorable mention all-Frontier League honors following the league race Thursday at Lewis-Young Park.

“Wyatt turned in a great race as well,” coach Reece said. “He is continuing to improve his racing not only in time but in competitiveness. He again made some big moves in the last 1,200 meters to put himself in 19th place. He has put in the time, like the rest of his teammates both boys and girls, to give himself the opportunity to do something special at the end of the season.”

In the team standings, the Louisburg girls came in sixth in what it is a very competitive Frontier League with 161 points. Baldwin won the league crown with 19 points and De Soto was second with 72.

On the boys' side, the Wildcats finished seventh with 191 points. Baldwin completed the sweep to win the league title with 30 points and De Soto was second with 51.

"Our kids always work hard and embrace the quality of our league," coach Reece said. "I think this is true in all sports. They ran well and improved their times from the week before which is what a coach likes to see."

In the girls' race, sophomore Savannah Reinhart was second on the Louisburg team in 30th overall with a time of 23:00 and teammate Madelynn Yalowitz was 33rd in 23:10. Juniors Liz Hildreth (24:24) and Kaitlyn Gaza (24:29) came in 47th and 48th, respectively.

Seniors Abby Bergman (25:27) and Maddie McDaniel (25:32) took 57th and 58th and freshman Alex Miller (25:38) was 60th.

Lilly Mick (61st), Mara Justesen (62nd), Lexie Reece (63rd), Bryn O'Meara (70th), Lily Cook (72nd), Cierra Rose (74th), Tomi Frederes (75th), Alexa Goodspeed (76th), Hailey Crowder (77th), Grace Rolofson (79th) and Ryan Caldwell (80th) also ran for the Lady Cats.

Senior Devyn Small was second on the Wildcat boys' squad as he came in 49th overall in 19:43. Junior Austin Raetzel was 66th in 20:27, senior Zach Minor was 68th in 20:31 and senior Eddie Murphy was 73rd 20:46.

Jarod Rose (74th), Bryce Kuhlman (81st), Spencer Rogers (91st),

Kennedy Unthank (94th) and Michael Shaner (96th) rounded out the Louisburg lineup.

The Wildcats will now prepare for their final meet of the season Saturday. Louisburg will run in the regional meet in Garnett at the Garnett Golf Course – the same course where it opened its season. The first race is set to begin at 10:30 a.m.

Wildcats run strong at home meet



Louisburg cross country runners (from left) Alex Miller, Kaitlyn Gaza and Liz Hildreth get off to a good start during the Louisburg Invitational on Thursday at Lewis-Young Park. The Lady Cats finished second in the team standings with 37 points.

The Louisburg High School cross country team finally got the opportunity to run on its home course Thursday and it was a welcome sight for some.

However, just because it was at home, didn't mean it was easy.

The Wildcats faced a lot of challenges on their trek through Lewis-Young Park and they came away with a lot to be excited about.

Louisburg's girls squad continued its strong season as the Lady Cats finished second in the team standings with 37 points and medaled five runners in the process. Spring Hill won the meet with 21 points.

The boys also ran against some strong competition. Sophomore Wyatt Reece and senior Devyn Small both picked up medals as they earned a finish in the top 15.

Sophomore Isabelle Holtzen and junior Madelynn Yalowitz stayed near the front of the pack to lead the Louisburg girls to a third and fourth place finish, respectively. Holtzen ran a time of 23 minutes and 1 second and Yalowitz finished in 23:07.

"Isabelle and Madelynn ran a fantastic race," coach John Reece said. "It was probably the most competitive race they have ran all year, trying to catch up to those two Spring Hill girls and that was really impressive to see. It shows me there is some definite possibilities for them for league and regionals if they are going to work that hard.

"The girls behind them did a great job. I didn't think we could get Spring Hill team wise, but I wanted to give them a run and I was proud of their effort. For some of those girls, it was their first time on this course and it isn't an easy one."

Savannah Reinhart came in ninth (24:14), while Liz Hildreth (25:03) crossed the finish line in 12th and teammate Kaitlyn Gaza (25:59) was 14th to round out the Lady Cat medalists.

It was a difficult course for all the runners involved as they encountered a few different hills, including one near the finish line that tested a lot of the competitors.

“You have to sprint up it,” Holtzen said of the final climb. “I just wanted to get up it and give everything that I had. It is nice knowing the course because you know where the mile markers are, or if there is a hill coming up and I know that I have to power through it.

“Personally I think this is the best race that I have run all season. I think my mentality was better and it was the most I have ever pushed I was pretty proud of that. For the girls as whole, I think we did really well together.”

Senior Abby Bergman and freshman Alex Miller came up just short in their quest for a medal. Bergman was 16th in 26:36 and Miller was 17th in 26:37.

Wyatt Reece continues to hit his stride as the season is drawing to a close. The Louisburg sophomore came in fifth overall in 18:37. He moved up from seventh to fifth place in the final three-quarters of a mile and didn't let up as he reached the finish.



Senior Zach Minor runs up the final hill on the course at Lewis-Young Park on Thursday during the Louisburg Invitational.

"I think I could have had a better time, but it was a good race," Wyatt said. "We had a bunch of good people running, and the ones that were in front of me were way in front of me. If I would have started out with them I might have had a chance, but I started a little further back.

"I just pushed there at the last hill. I didn't really save energy for the hill, but it is just about guts when you are heading to the finish. It is tough."

Small also had one of his better finishes of the season as he picked up a medal after he ran a 20:15 to come in 14th overall.

"We keep improving and working hard," coach Reece said. "Devyn has run second all year long, he is a senior, and did a great job. He ran hard at the finish and held off that final kid at the end and that is great to see him get a medal."

Zach Minor (20:40), Austin Raetzel (20:56) and Eddie Murphy (21:17) came in 18th, 19th and 20th, respectively on their home course. Spencer Rogers rounded out the Wildcat team in 22nd in 24:15.

In the team, standings the Wildcats were third with 69 points. Ottawa won the meet with 28 points and Spring Hill was second with 33. Spring Hill's Dylan Brenneman took the top individual spot in 16:47.

The junior varsity girls also had a big day for Louisburg as the Lady Cats medaled eight of the top 10 runners in the race.

Lilly Mick won the race in 27:23 to lead the way for Louisburg. Lily Cook ran a time of 27:51 to come in second and Mara Justesen was third in 28:25.

Bryn O'Meara (fourth), Tomi Frederes (fifth), Lexie Reece (sixth), Hailey Crowder (ninth) and Cierra Rose (10th) all earned medals for the Lady Cats as well.

In the junior varsity boys race, Bryce Kuhlman led Louisburg in 13th place in 23:39 and Gareth Baus was 16th. Michael Shaner and Kennedy Unthank rounded out the Wildcat lineup in 18th and 19th, respectively.

Louisburg will get a chance to run on its home course one last time Thursday when it hosts the Frontier League meet. Races are set to begin at 4 p.m.

Reece runs way into Wildcat history book



Louisburg sophomore Wyatt Reece sprints to the finish line during a meet earlier this season. Reece ran a personal best time of 17 minutes and 24 seconds, which was good enough for a 12th place finish, a medal and the seventh-fastest time in LHS cross country history.

PITTSBURG – As just a sophomore, Wyatt Reece has quietly become one of the top runners on the Louisburg High School cross country team.

There wasn't anything quiet about his performance Thursday during the Pittsburg Invitational. Reece recorded one of the top times in program history as he ran a personal best 17 minutes and 24 seconds to finish 12th overall and earn a medal.

The Pittsburg course was just short of a full 5-kilometers, but Reece's time was a loud statement that he is vying to become one of the top runners in the history of the program.

"Wyatt continues to compete well and improve his times," Louisburg coach John Reece said. "With an adjusted time due to the short course, he ran a personal best 17:59, which puts him at No. 7 all-time for our program.

"Pittsburg's course is very flat, so it is challenging to keep pressing the pace because there are no down hills that could be used to relax a little on."

As a team, Wyatt helped the Wildcats to a fifth-place team finish with 154 points. Pittsburg won the meet with 44 points and Paola was second with 65.

Senior Devyn Small was the next to finish for Louisburg as he took 32nd in 18:51. Teammate Austin Raetzel came in 44th in 19:21 and Eddie Murphy was 52nd in 19:31.

Zach Minor (19:56) and Jarod Rose (20:00) rounded out the Wildcat team in 60th and 61st place, respectively.

The Louisburg girls cross country team faced one of their toughest fields of the season as the Lady Cats competed against some of the top runners in the state.

Sophomore Isabelle Holtzen led Louisburg in 30th overall in 21:52. Junior Madelynn Yalowitz and sophomore Savannah Reinhart followed right behind her. Yalowitz was 31st in 21:53 and Reinhart came in 32nd with a time of 21:54.

Liz Hildreth was next for the Lady Cats in 44th in 22:45 and Kaitlyn Gaza was 46th in 22:55. Alex Miller rounded out the Louisburg lineup in 56th with a time of 24:29.

The Lady Cats were fifth in the team standings with 114 points. Frontenac won the title with 51 points and Fort Scott was second with 53.

“The girls ran well again,” coach Reece said. “It was a strong field of runners and a strong field of teams. I think we might have gone out a little fast at the start but that was OK. We learn every race so that we are better the next time.”

Lilly Mick recorded a top-10 finish to lead the Louisburg junior varsity girls in 10th with a time of 24:03. Teammate Mara Justesen came in 16th in 24:50, while Lily Cook (25:02) and Bryn O’Meara (25:11) finished 18th and 19th, respectively.

Lexie Reece (23rd), Hailey Crowder (38th), Cierra Rose (39th) and Grace Rolofson (47th) also competed for Louisburg.

Bryce Kuhlman led the Louisburg junior varsity boys in 16th in 20:29 and Gareth Baus was next on the team in 18th with a time of 20:37. Kennedy Unthank (22:27) and Michael Shaner (22:35) rounded out the Wildcat runners in 41st and 46th, respectively.

Louisburg returns to action this Thursday when it hosts the Louisburg Invitational at Lewis-Young Park. The races are set to begin at 4 p.m.

Lady Cat runners make history with team title



The Louisburg High School girls cross country team won its first team title in the program's history Thursday during the Ramsey Invitational at Prairie View High School. Members of the team are (from left) Alex Miller, Liz Hildreth, Kaitlyn Gaza, Isabelle Holtzen, Madelynn Yalowitz, Abby Bergman and Savannah Reinhart.

LA CYGNE – As the Louisburg girls cross country team made its way across the finish line Thursday at the Ramsey Invitational, the Lady Cats had no idea they were making history.

For the first time in the existence of the program, the Lady Cats won a meet team title as they ran away from the competition at Prairie View High School. Louisburg won the Ramsey Invitational with 27 points, which was 40 points ahead of runner-up Blue Valley.

The Lady Cats had four runners finish in the top 10 and win individual medals. Varsity runners Madelynn Yalowitz, Isabelle Holtzen, Liz Hildreth, Kaitlyn Gaza, Savannah Reinhart, Alex Miller and Abby Bergman also left with team gold medals.

“We have had good finishes in the past, but we have never had

a group that has done that, which is just fantastic,” Louisburg coach John Reece said. “It is very fun. You can’t help but smile when those things happen. They are coming together like I hoped they could and would.”

Louisburg also got some good news on the boys’ side as sophomore Wyatt Reece finished in the top five. Wyatt ran a personal best 18 minutes and 53 seconds to finish fourth and help the boys to a fourth-place team finish.

“I thought I did pretty well,” Reece said. “I was able to get a personal record by 30 seconds so that was really good. It got off to a fast start and I was able to just settle in and everything else seemed to go well.

“I ran a personal record here last year and this is a course where you can see people the whole time. You can see people in front of you, if you have a sharp turn you can see people behind you, so it gives you a good idea of where you are with the rest of the field.”



Kaitlyn Gaza races toward the finish line for Louisburg during the Ramsey Invitational on

Thursday.

Yalowitz led a group of Lady Cat runners that crossed the finish early. The Louisburg junior came in fifth in 24:10 and the next three to follow were her teammates.

Holtzen, who ran side-by-side with Yalowitz for most of the race, came in shortly behind her and took sixth in 24:20.

"It was nice to have the whole team run together and this was probably the first time it has happened to us in a meet," Holtzen said. "We are just pushing each other, and having to stay with each other really I think helped the team out as a whole."

Hildreth and Gaza made their way through the field in the last mile as they came in seventh and eighth, respectively. Hildreth ran a 24:24 and Gaza followed just 10 seconds behind.

"I was out in the field yelling at them for most of the race, so I didn't get to see them finish, but it felt good to see them to continue to move up for the whole race," coach Reece said. "Our third and fourth runners (Hildreth and Gaza) made up a lot of ground at the end of the second mile to get into that position and finished the way we did."

Reinhart was next on the team in 18th overall with a time of 25:48 and Miller was 21st in 26:10. Bergman rounded out the Lady Cats in 26:25.

It was a finish the Lady Cat runners will never forget, but they did have a little extra motivation for this race.

"I thought we all did really well and we all pushed ourselves really hard to run our best, especially since coach told us we wouldn't have practice if we ran well this time, so I think that helped a lot," Yalowitz said.

As for Wyatt, he was able to get off to a strong start and

stay with the fast-moving pack early on in the boys race. He was able to gradually move his way up to fourth-place with a big finish.



Louisburg runners (from left) Austin Raetzel, Eddie Murphy, Jarod Rose, Wyatt Reece, Devyn Small and Zach Minor take off from their starting blocks Thursday at Prairie View.

“Wyatt did fantastic,” coach Reece said. “He started off with his first mile just under six minutes and did great. He ran his race at the beginning. The front group went out awful fast, and as he continued into the second mile, he just kept picking them off. I could tell in the third mile that his stride was quickening and his pace was increasing. Then in the last quarter-mile he just let it all go and good things happened.”

Senior Devyn Small was second on the Wildcat team as he ran a 20:40 to come in 20th overall. Fellow seniors Zach Minor (21:05) and Eddie Murphy (21:19) were 26th and 28th, respectively.

Sophomore Jarod Rose was 33rd in 21:38 and junior Austin Raetzel ran a 21:57 to take 36th.

In the junior varsity races, Bryce Kuhlman led Louisburg in 12th in 22:11. Gareth Baus (21st) and Michael Shaner (47th) also competed for the Wildcats.

Lilly Mick paced the Lady Cats in 12th overall with a time of 27:47. Tomi Frederes followed in 14th in 27:53 and Mara Justesen came in 15th in 28:12.

Lily Cook (17th), Bryn O'Meara (20th), Cierra Rose (33rd), Hailey Crowder (35th), Alexa Goodspeed (36th), Ryan Caldwell (38th) and Grace Rolofson (43rd) also ran for Louisburg.

The Wildcats return to action Thursday when they travel to the Pittsburg Invitational. Races are set to begin at 4 p.m.

Reece earns top 10 finish to lead Wildcats



Wyatt Reece leads a pack of runners around a turn and is followed closely by teammate Devyn Small during the Wellsville Invitational on Thursday. Reece finished 10th overall and earned a medal.

WELLSVILLE – The Louisburg High School cross country team has been showing improvements after every meet and the Wellsville Invitational was no exception.

Louisburg medaled three runners in the varsity races and earned two more junior varsity medals Thursday. All three varsity medalists continue to make strides for the Wildcats.

Sophomore Wyatt Reece had the best finish on the day as he finished 10th overall in 19 minutes and 31 seconds. Reece had a strong final leg to crack a spot in the top 10.

“Wyatt ran a solid race,” Louisburg coach John Reece said. “He is starting to get a feel for his race and pace during the meets. He made strong moves through the field during the second and third miles to get to 10th place. I expect to see even more gains as the next two meets play out.”

The Louisburg girls produced two medalists on their side. Sophomore Isabelle Holtzen finished 12th in 23:55 and sophomore Savannah Reinhart was 19th with a time of 24:37.

Louisburg had three more runners that finished in the top 30. Junior Madelynn Yalowitz made her way back from injury to move up from junior varsity and join her varsity teammates. Yalowitz finished 26th in 25:21.

Junior Liz Hildreth ran a time of 25:28 to cross the finish line shortly behind Yalowitz in 27th. Junior Kaitlyn Gaza was 30th in 25:45.

Senior Abby Bergman (26:03) and sophomore Lexie Reece (29:50) rounded out the varsity lineup in 34th and 49th, respectively.

As a team, the Lady Cats finished fifth with 104 points. Eudora won the team title with 34 points and Spring Hill finished second with 50.

“The girls continue to impress me with their effort,” coach Reece said. “I will again have a slight shuffle of runners for my top seven because of their inner-squad competition. Isabelle ran a great race at Wellsville. Like Wyatt, they are both young runners who are starting to figure it out.

“Savannah was doing well but stepped funny and dropped off a little. Once she came back around to me she started to find her stride again and finished strong. Madelynn is making great strides in coming back for her injury. She is running better and better each day both in meets and practice.”



Senior Abby Bergman stays in front of a pack of runners Thursday in Wellsville.

Senior Devyn Small came in second on the team to help lead the Wildcat squad. Small ran a 21:22 to finish 33rd overall and junior Austin Raetzel finished 37th in 21:39.

Senior Eddie Murphy (21:42), sophomore Jarod Rose (21:54) and senior Spencer Rogers (25:35) crossed the finish in 39th, 44th and 58th, respectively.

The Wildcats took seventh in the team standings with 155 points. Eudora won the team title with 39 points and West Franklin was second with 71 points.

“The boys continue to work hard and I’m starting to see their team come together,” coach Reece said. “The next two meets will allow us to see different competition and to continue to work as a team to improve our standings in a race.”

Two junior varsity girls also earned medals for their top 10 finishes.

Freshman Alex Miller led the Lady Cats in ninth with a time of 28:22. Sophomore Lilly Mick came in 10th in 28:30 to also grab a medal.

Bryn O’Meara (20th), Mara Justesen (21st), Lily Cook (22nd), Alexa Goodspeed (23rd), Hailey Crowder (24th), Cierra Rose (26th), Ryan Caldwell (29th) and Grace Rolofson (37th) also competed for Louisburg.

Freshman Bryce Kuhlman led Louisburg’s junior varsity boys in 17th with a time of 23:37 and senior Michael Shaner was next in 27th and ran a 24:48.

Kennedy Unthank (35th) and Gareth Baus (40th) rounded out the Wildcat lineup.

Louisburg returns to action Thursday when it travels to the Prairie View Invitational. Races are set to begin at 4 p.m.

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 Ciseti 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."