KSHSAA releases 2017-18 classifications

The Kansas High School Activities Association released the classifications for the 2017-18 season on Tuesday morning, and for Louisburg High School, much remains the same.

The Wildcats are currently a Class 4A-Division I program with 532 students, but after this season the classification system will change. Class 4A will get rid of the divisions and 4A will have just 36 schools. Louisburg is still expected to be in 4A for the foreseeable future.

However, several schools across the state made classification changes.


Kansas State High School Activities Association

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE


Kansas State High School Activities Association

2017-2018 Classifications and Enrollments

Enrollment figures as of September 20, 2017 based on ninth, tenth, eleventh and twelfth grades.

Note: Schools are listed in descending order



Arkansas City and Sumner Academy dropped from Class 5A to 4A for the upcoming season, while Galena, Hugoton and Marysville all moved up to 4A. Maize South jumped from 4A to 5A.

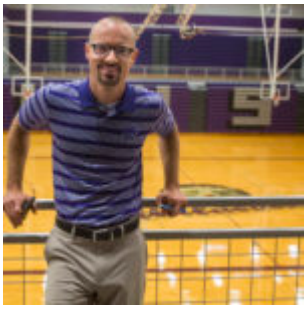
Colby , Goodland, Scott City and Haven all dropped from 4A to 3A schools, while McLouth moved up from 2A to 3A.



Hays is currently the largest 4A school with 791 students, followed by Sumner Academy (782), Andover Central (764), Bonner Springs (762) and Arkansas City (757).

Sub-state and regional assignments for the fall season will be released in the coming days.

Holloway excited for new role as LHS activities director



Louisburg High School activities director Jeremy Holloway is looking forward to his new position as he starts his 17th year in the USD 416 school district.

Growing up, Jeremy Holloway wasn’t one to stay in a place for too long.

Holloway spent most of his childhood and young adult life moving from place to place. He wasn’t the type of person who envisioned himself putting down roots.

“I was a constant migrant,” Holloway said.

That was until he moved to Louisburg with his wife Megan. Now instead of a migrant, Holloway is deep-rooted in a town he loves.

It made his decision, almost two months ago, an easy one.

Back in June, Holloway was hired as the new Louisburg High School activities director and assistant principal, following the resignation of former activities director Darin Gagnebin. Holloway, who has spent the last 16 years as a teacher at Louisburg Middle School, is ready for the new challenge.

“I am really looking forward to it,” Holloway said. “I have been here in Louisburg for 17 years. I never lived anywhere for more than four years in my life until I came to Louisburg. I never knew what it was like to be a part of a community and when I got here I just fell in love with the town. I was excited to become a part of it and Louisburg became important

to me. The teaching was great and getting to know all the kids and see them grow up all the way through college was fun. Now I see some of my former students teaching in the building here and it is an amazing feeling. It just felt like home to me."

Fate seemed to step in at the right time for Holloway. He entered the summer still planning to teach history at the middle school, but the dominoes quickly started to fall into place.

Holloway was well on his way to getting his administration degree this past school year as he was planning on holding on to it until something in Louisburg came open. He didn't have to wait long.

"I had to get recertified, so I talked with my wife and I said why get an education masters if it is just going to move me on the pay scale," he said. "Why not get an administration degree to have options? There are other places near here that are looking for people, but that isn't what I want. The only move I would make is to stay in Louisburg. I happened to be down in Eureka Springs on vacation and I got a text in middle of night that Gagnebin had resigned. I had just got my diploma the day before we left. I applied and it turned out well and hopefully it was a good thing."

Louisburg USD 416 superintendent Dr. Brian Biermann had to sift through more than 20 different applicants for the job, but he believes Holloway is going to do great things in the position.

"Jeremy has been a loyal and dedicated teacher and coach in our community for 17 years," Dr. Biermann said. "Jeremy possesses many strong leadership attributes that will allow him to be a strong, instructional leader at Louisburg High School. He is passionate about education, has a strong work ethic and is committed to our community.

"Jeremy is all about building positive relationships with

students, staff and the community. For 17 years he has been building these relationships. Now, he will be able to build upon his unique skill set in a leadership position in our district. I am excited to see the great things Mr. Holloway can contribute to our district and community in this new role."

One of the first things Holloway wanted to do was to get to know his new coaching staff. Several new coaches were hired this past school year and he wanted to see what they were all about.

"I just want them to feel comfortable with me and let them understand that I am approachable," Holloway said. "That relationship piece is huge. I am getting to know where they are from, how many kids they have and I want them to feel comfortable coming to me. We do lose some great experience, but we have gained some capable coaches and a lot of enthusiasm. I just want to be a positive impact for them."

Since he started officially on July 24, Holloway has been hard at work in several different areas, but one of the bigger things going on now is the shuffling of the Frontier League.

The league, which will be at seven schools this year, will move up to nine starting for the 2018-19 school year. Bonner Springs, Tonganoxie and Piper will join the league, while De Soto will depart.

Baldwin, an original league member, is concerned the school will move down to Class 3A starting in 2018-19, thanks to changes in the classification system. If it happens, it will create scheduling conflicts for football.

"The biggest conflict right now is Baldwin is right on the edge of becoming 3A and they think it will happen," Holloway said. "If Baldwin is in our league, which is what we plan on, they are required to play five district games for football, which only leaves them three league games. If only three

league teams play Baldwin, then the rest of the league teams have to find another team to play. I have schools from Lansing, Independence, Coffeyville, Chanute and other schools calling me trying to lock up games. There are so many different scenarios so we just have to wait and see. That is one thing that I am really working on right now."

With the activity season fast approaching, Holloway is excited for everything to get underway. He is also looking forward to getting to know the fan base more.

"I have always been highly impressed of Louisburg and the support of its teams and the turnout we will get, especially for football games," Holloway said. "I encourage Louisburg to continue the tradition of being a class act. I think that every town has its own culture and a lot of it starts with the coaches. If your coaches are harassing refs, your players are probably going to start to learn that they can do that and that will trickle down to the parents and crowd. Without pointing fingers, there are certain places where that is the climate. I think Louisburg has been great. There are always going to be situations, but I would encourage fans and parents to support our coaches and let them coach.

"I am looking forward to an exciting year. We have great coaches, that are experienced and they are very innovative. They are organized and they all seem truly excited about what is going on. The community can rest assured that the coaches that are in place right now have the best interest of the kids and the programs."

Opinion: Time to look back and enjoy successes



The Louisburg High School football team was one of many bright spots for LHS athletics this past school year.

We live in a world where, especially in sports, we often don't take time to reflect on our accomplishments – and instead we are in a rush to move on to the next set of obstacles.

In reality, we are in a "what have you done for me lately" society and sometimes don't remember, or enjoy, those special moments where our hard work has paid off.

Yes, I understand you don't want to relish in those accomplishments as that doesn't make you a better athlete, or whatever your specialty may be, but not taking the time to enjoy the ride can be detrimental.

And what a ride it was for Louisburg High School athletics this past season.

The Wildcats had a special year in several sports, and before we focus on the 2017-18 campaign, we should look back at what the 16-17 season brought us. Just take a look at what these Wildcats accomplished.

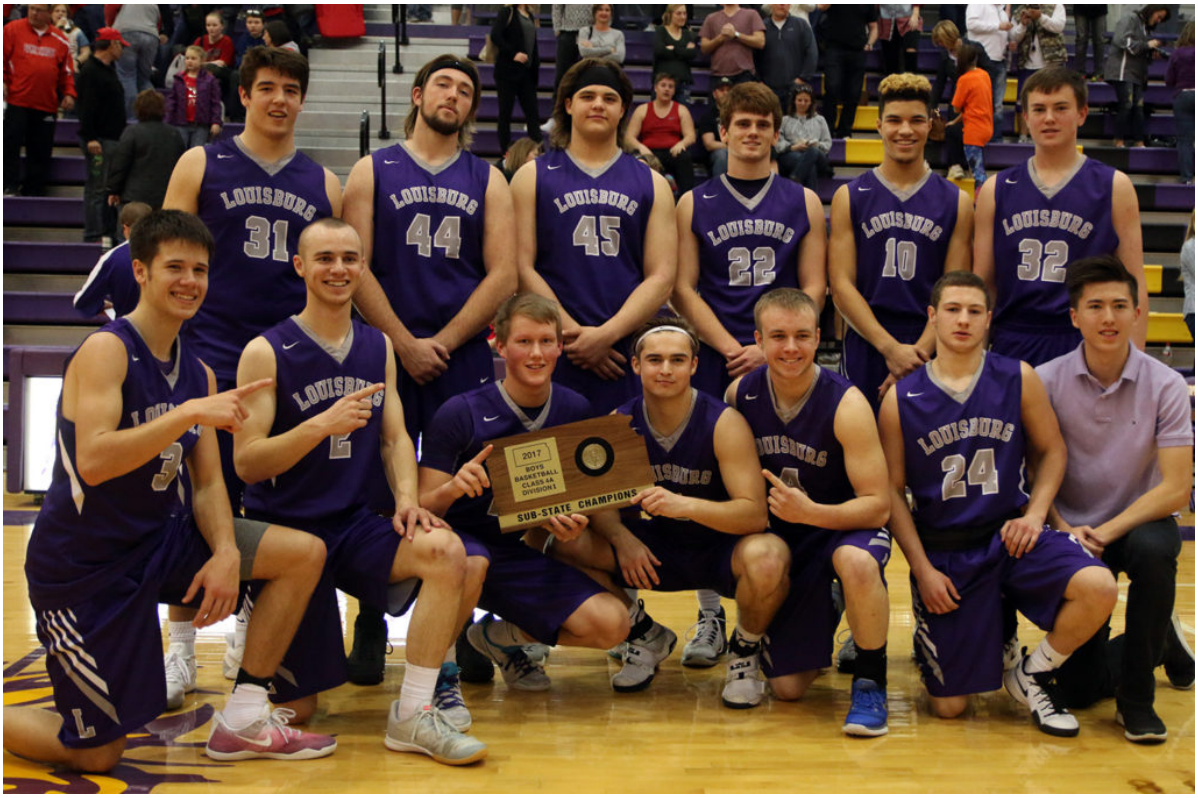
- There is probably no better place to start than the Louisburg soccer teams. Both the boys and girls teams earned spots in the state semifinals for the first time

in program history and both finished fourth. The boys team made it to state for the first time in their 14 years, while the girls advanced to the state tournament in just their second season.



The Louisburg High School girls soccer team finished fourth in the state in just their second season. The Wildcat boys also finished fourth as they advanced to the state semifinals for the first time in program history.

- It was quite the season for the Wildcat boys basketball team as they advanced to the state tournament for the first time since 2005. Louisburg won its sub-state tournament with a 64-52 win over Fort Scott in the championship game.



The Louisburg boys basketball team qualified for state for the first time since 2005.

- The Louisburg football team made quite the run in the 2016 season. The Wildcats won their first playoff game since 2012 and earned a regional title in the process with a win over Independence. Even though their season came to an end in the next round to eventual state champion Bishop Miege, the Wildcats' still finished with an 8-3 record.
- Wrestling had another big season as the Wildcats qualified eight for the Class 4A state tournament in Salina. Although Ryan Adams was the lone state medalist, as he finished sixth overall at 138 pounds, the Wildcats tied a school record for number of state qualifiers that was set back in 1984.
- In cross country, the Wildcats sent three runners to the state meet and had their first state medalist since 2006 when freshman Trinity Moore finished 19th overall, as she, Wyatt Reece and Tim Smith competed at the Wamego meet. Moore was also the school's first female runner to earn a state medal.

- Freshman golfer Calvin Dillon became the Wildcats' first state medalist in several years as he finished 10th at the Class 4A state tournament and was one of two Wildcats, along with Ty Martin, to qualify for state. Dillon could quite possibly be the first freshman golfer in school history to get a medal, but since golf stats aren't quite as well kept, it is hard to tell for sure.
- T.J. Dover and Isabelle Holtzen came through with state medals of their own following the state track meet. Holtzen finished seventh at the Class 4A meet in the pole vault and Dover was eighth in the discus as both medaled for the first time. Holtzen also broke the school record in the pole vault earlier in the season after she cleared 11 feet, 1 inch.
- The girls basketball and softball teams both had big improvements from a season ago as they each reached 10 wins despite falling in the first round of their sub-state and regional tournaments. Softball doubled their win total from 2016, while the girls basketball team improved by seven victories.
- The Louisburg volleyball team advanced to the sub-state championship game against rival Paola and was just a few points away from advancing to its fifth consecutive state tournament. The Lady Cats also finished the season with 23 victories.

Most schools across the state would love to have the kind of success Louisburg experienced this year and to me that doesn't seem like it is talked about enough.

Sometimes we get caught up in losses or not meeting expectations, when in fact, compared to a lot of schools, Louisburg exceeds expectations – at least it does mine.

Could these programs be better? Sure they could and the coaches would be the first to tell you. At the same time, we all need to take a step back, look at the big picture and enjoy the success we have.

To me, Louisburg athletics is as healthy as it has been in a long time.

A lot has been made about all the coaches that have left recently. Louisburg will have four new head coaches this upcoming school year and several new assistants.

Some people have considered this a mass exodus due problems at the school. It couldn’t be further from the truth. A lot of it is just coincidence. For some it was retirement, others wanted to spend more time with family and a few more just wanted a change.

Former activities director Darin Gagenbin left to be closer to his family and work in the town where he lives. I know all about how great of an opportunity that is and it is the same thing I did almost 10 years ago when I moved here with my family. Working in the town you live in is something you can’t put a value on.

Louisburg found a great replacement in Jeremy Holloway, who has been with the district for 17 years and is invested in the community. The school has also brought it a lot of new, young coaches that have come in with excitement and new ideas.

It is bittersweet for me as a lot of those coaches I had a chance to get to know really well are now gone. Although I am mainly a solo operation, I consider a lot them my co-workers and it stinks to see them move on, but I also know they are doing the best for themselves and their families.

The same could be said for the class of 2017. The group of seniors I worked with this past year were great to get to know, just like all the senior classes before them.

I appreciated all their support and what I do could not be done without those kids. It is great to see them grow up and watch them become successful outside the classroom. I am not a teacher or coach, but still appreciate all they accomplish.

With 2016-17 in the rear view mirror, it will soon be time to focus on the upcoming season and I couldn’t be more excited to see what accomplishments this group of Wildcats have in store. It has all the makings of a fun and special year.

Gagnebin steps down as LHS activities director



Louisburg High School activities director Darin Gagnebin presents the Wildcat girls soccer team with their regional championship trophy last month. Gagnebin resigned his post earlier this month to take a similar position in Paola.

Darin Gagnebin has a fondness for Louisburg High School, his coaches and students.

That made it all the more hard to say goodbye.

Gagnebin resigned his post as LHS assistant principal and activities director earlier this month to tentatively take the same position at Paola High School. His last day in Louisburg was last week.

Gagnebin spent a total of 17 years in the Louisburg school

district, with the last six spent as activities director. He was also a teacher and coach for 11 years.

Family was the biggest reason he decided to make the move. Gagnebin and his family currently reside in Paola and his two children attend schools in Paola.

“People have come and gone, but it is still family here,” Gagnebin said. “I am comfortable here and Louisburg has done a lot for me. I just can’t pass up an opportunity to be where my kids are at. I know I could have brought my kids here, but my wife and I made that decision a long time ago of where we were going to live because of where she taught and I taught. I never thought back when we first moved to Paola and when we had kids, that we would be in this position.”

It was a difficult decision for Gagnebin as he leaves behind a group of coaches, several of whom he recently hired. The Louisburg district had a number of new coaches come on board for the upcoming school year.

“We have gone through some trials in the last couple of years and that is with any school,” Gagnebin said. “I told my wife, that if this was going to happen the way it did and I could pick the time, I wish the timing would have happened two years down the road. I would have loved to see what this young group of teachers and coaches are going to do coming in.

“I told my wife that I was really excited about coming back next year and I felt we made some good hires. We have a passionate coaching staff coming on and they are great people with new ideas. It just happened out of the blue.”

The opening came when former Paola High School principal Phil Bressler took the new principal job at Pittsburg High School. Paola assistant principal and activities director Jeff Hines was elevated to the Paola principal position, which left the Panthers needing an activities director.

It can be traced back even further when the Pittsburg High School journalism class wrote an investigative piece that ousted its newly hired principal, which forced the school to reopen the position and eventually hired Bressler.

“Had Pittsburg’s journalism class not done their job, we wouldn’t be sitting here talking right now,” Gagnebin said.

The Paola position was an opportunity Gagnebin just couldn’t pass up as he will have an opportunity to watch more of his children’s events and work closer to home.

“I have missed a lot of my own kids’ stuff,” he said. “But the people here have been really great, (Principal) Tammy (Thomasson) now and Dave (Tappan) before her, to let me try to get to as much stuff as I can. I still miss things. These opportunities don’t come around very often and I just figured this would be a great fit for me and my family.

“But I couldn’t ask for a better group of coaches here in Louisburg. They are good and passionate about what they do. I really have developed some good bonds over the years. I know some have left and some have stayed on, but the coaches and staff I have had has been great.”

Changes to classification system will impact Louisburg

Member schools in the Kansas State High School Activities Association sent ripples across the state last week when they passed two proposals that will affect high school athletics beginning in the 2018-19 season.

For football, the two 4A divisions and Class 2-1A have been eliminated. They have been replaced with 32 team classifications in 4A, 5A and 6A, while 3A and 2A will have 48-team classifications. The remaining schools will play in 1A.

The second proposal was for all other sports. Other than football, classes 4A, 5A and 6A will have 36 teams in each division. Classes 3A and 2A will have 64 schools each, while the remaining schools will be in 1A.

The football proposal passed with a vote of 215-73 and the all-sports proposal passed with a 207-145 majority. All of the classes, except 6A and 1A, were in favor.

With those new proposals comes a different playoff system for many of the sports.

Louisburg High School, which is a Class 4A school, will see changes in five sports programs – football, basketball, baseball, softball and volleyball.

In football, Louisburg will no longer have district play as the playoffs will begin in week nine. Class 4A will play an eight-game regular season and then each side of the state will be seeded in a bracket from 1 through 16, based on their record.

Given the fact the Frontier League currently has nine teams after recently adding three schools in Tonganoxie, Bonner Springs and Piper, the Wildcats will no longer have to play a non-league opponent. De Soto recently chose to leave the Frontier League following the 2017-18 season to join a new league made up of 5A schools.

“Normally we go out in October to Salina, we would redistrict for 2018 and 2019,” Louisburg activities director Darin Gagnebin said. “I don’t even know that we will have to go cause our league has nine teams, so we would play eight league games and the ninth game gets assigned to you for the playoffs. As of right now in football, we will no longer have any out of conference opponents as long as we maintain nine in the league.”

Another change will be in basketball. For the postseason, there will no longer be substates, instead the 18 teams on each side of the state will be bracketed out by record beginning with two play-in games.

From there, the bracket will be sized down to four-team pods, with the higher seed hosting the game. Teams will have to win two games to reach the state tournaments. Pods will be 1-16-8-9 seeds, 4-13-5-12, 2-15-7-10 and 3-14-6-11. The eight pod winners will advance to the state tournament.

“Depending on where we fall, it could increase travel depending on where we are seeded,” Gagnebin said. “We could have to drive down to Coffeyville or drive up to Atchison, you just don’t know until the end of the year.”

Basketball schedules will also be different with the addition of the new league teams in 2018-19. There will no longer be double round-robin schedules. There will be eight league games, six tournament games and athletic directors will have to find a way to fill the other six.

“We will start in August about building the new league

schedule and it will be tough," Gagnebin said. "One thing you will see is we won't have double round-robin's anymore because we can't play everyone twice. I think there will be traditional rivalries that are held to where we would play those twice due to proximity. Quite frankly, it wouldn't be smart for Louisburg not to play Paola, Ottawa or Spring Hill twice due to higher attendance numbers and proximity. It will probably increase travel costs because you are playing more non-conference opponents."

Baseball and softball will be similar as there will no longer be regionals. Like basketball, there will be two play-in games with the same pod structure. The top four overall seeds will each host all games in their pod on the same day.

In volleyball, there will be four substates across the state, broken into eight brackets. There will also be nine teams in each substate, which will require a play-in game. Teams will need to win two games to qualify for state.

Postseasons for wrestling, track, soccer, cross country and golf will remain the same.

However, even with the new changes, the proposals don't address the competitive balance issue between public and private schools that many members have been talking about for the last several years.

Although he likes the new playoff system, the fact these changes don't address the problem is one of the reasons Gagnebin voted no on the new proposals.

"It was a shock because I didn't think it was going to pass," Gagnebin said. "Other than the playoff system, in my opinion, it doesn't do anything for Class 4A. All the work that went into splitting 4A into two divisions is now gone. I feel bad for those schools because they put in a ton of work. It doesn't really affect us because we are locked into 4A and we are right in the middle of the pack.

“I didn’t see how it benefited Louisburg or 4A, other than the playoffs system where it should ensure you have more competitive teams at state. Since you are seeding them out now, you shouldn’t have a substate of teams with losing records. They could have done that without this.”

Although private schools like Bishop Miege, which have won several state titles in the last few years, could find itself moving up a classification with the new measures, it isn’t a permanent solution according to Gagnebin.

“Enrollment could bump some private schools up a class, but that doesn’t fix the problem,” Gagnebin said. “Private schools can control enrollment. According to (Miege) they are losing enrollment and could be back in 4A. It doesn’t impact the private issue at all and that is why I didn’t vote for it. It is not fixing what the 80 percent of athletic directors polled in Kansas asking what the biggest problems in classifications are. It doesn’t address the real problem.”

Opinion: Griffin left his legacy on Louisburg



Louisburg football and track coach Gary Griffin said goodbye to Louisburg High School last week as he retired from the school after 32 years. Griffin won two state titles during

that time and coached hundreds of athletes.

Gary Griffin is a man of few words. This is not a heavily-guarded secret. Anyone who has been in Louisburg for any amount of time knows this is the case.

So, here I am, trying to figure out what to say about a man who has sculpted and guided high schoolers for more than three decades – a man who doesn't like to talk much.

It is not an easy task, but Griff, as he is admirably known, doesn't have to say anything. His actions speak for themselves. I was able to get dozens of responses from people who wanted to say 'Thank you' to Griff for all he has done and it was fantastic. It truly shows what impact he had on the community.

To be honest, this is a column I have been dreading on writing for several years now. I respect that heck out of Griff and have since I arrived here almost 10 years ago. In the last few years, I have come to realize that his time at Louisburg High School was coming to a close.

There was a part of me where I hoped he would hold out a little longer and my kids would either have the chance to have him as a science teacher or a coach. There is no one I would trust more with my children than him.

For the last decade, I have had the chance to watch Griff reach young athletes and get the best he could out of them. If the kids wanted to put in the work, Griff would take care of the rest.

Coaches and teachers like Gary Griffin are a dying breed. You don't see them stick around for 30-plus years at the same place anymore, and ones that like to coach multiple sports. He could do it all and he did it well.

During his time as a head football coach, Griff's success was obvious. He led the Wildcats to two state championship games in his 14 years, including the school's first state title in 2010.

About seven months after that, he coached the Louisburg boys track team to another state title in 2011. Personally, it was one of the more fun times for me covering Wildcat athletics.

For years, the only state title the school had won was in golf back in 1977, but it had been close in several instances. Then in less than a year, Louisburg wins two.

As much talent as those teams had, none of those titles happen without Griff and the group of coaches he assembled around him. They all worked so well together for several years and it was impressive to watch.

To me, what was more impressive was the fact he looked at this Paola High School graduate (yes, I grew up in Paola) and trusted me to cover Wildcat athletics the right way. Louisburg and Paola has been a great rivalry for several years and I am sure the last person Griff wanted to confide in after a game was this guy from Paola.

Instead, he looked past all that, and over the years I think I earned his trust. He trusted me to censor him during interviews and make him sound good in all the articles. Not sure I succeeded every time, but I did what I could.

I've teased him that I will release all the uncensored comments he made over the years. It would be great reading for sure.

He was there for me, like so many others, two years ago when I found out I was let go from my position with the newspaper. Griff was a sounding board when I was trying to figure out what I was going to do with my life.

He gave me some great advice and the confidence to go ahead and start Louisburg Sports Zone. I may have never been a student of his, or an athlete, but he helped me like he did so many others over the years.

Griff commanded respect from his players and he got it. He was often gruff, liked to yell at times and held his players accountable. He had the incredible balance of being tough on athletes and caring about them at the same time.

A lot of them didn't run off and pout when he got on to them, but instead they rose to the challenge and did things they didn't think they were capable of because they didn't want to disappoint him. I watched him get after players, and when the season was over, I saw him try to hold back tears as he had to say goodbye to his senior class. He loved his players and the feeling was mutual.

There was no doubt he had chances to go off to bigger schools, but he and his family loved this town and decided to make this their home. He and his wife Lori raised two wonderful kids here and have been a big part of the community.

Behind every great coach is dedicated and loyal coach's wife. Lori has stood by him through the good and bad times and put up with him being gone half of the year and leaving her to raise their two kids.

He would miss his kids' events because he was busy coaching someone else's children. It is a sacrifice not a lot of people are willing to make.

Griff didn't want to take the credit when things went well – he shifted that to his assistants and players. At the same time, he was the first person to stand there and take the complaints.

A coach's life is not an easy one, but Griff made it look a breeze for 32 years.

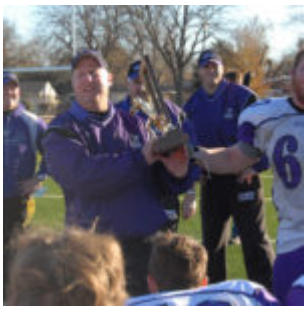
Now after years of hard work, he gets a chance to watch his own kids thrive in their lives. He will get the opportunity to watch his son Garrett find his way in the National Football League with the New Orleans Saints.

A little closer to home, he gets to see his daughter Gentry thrive in the nursing field and create a life for herself and her husband Drew Harding – who ironically will be teaching science and coaching at LHS next season.

Selfishly, it is sad Griff won't be roaming the sidelines or halls at LHS any longer. At the same time, I couldn't be happier for a man who put his heart and soul into a place and made better than when he arrived.

He put his stamp on Louisburg High School athletics and he will not be forgotten. A job well done Griff! Thanks for everything!

Thank you Griff…..



For the last 32 years, Gary Griffin has roamed the halls and sidelines at Louisburg High School. Whether as a teacher or a coach, he has made an impact on a lot of young lives, but also colleagues and family as well.

Griffin served as the Wildcat head football coach for 14 years, along with several years as an assistant. He was the

Louisburg boys basketball head coach for eight years and was either the boys or girls head track coach for 20 years.

Coach Griffin led the Wildcats to their first football state title in 2010 and the first boys track state title in 2011. He also coached several playoff runs, including as the head coach for the 2007 football team that finished as a state runner up. He was also an assistant on the state runner-up 1997 football team.

So before you totally put Louisburg High School in your rear view mirror, there are some people who wanted to say thank you for everything you have done. I will follow with my words a little later, but thanks again Coach Griff!



“We are so proud of Gary. We enjoyed watching him coach football, basketball and track at Louisburg High School. Our

highlight was when he and his team won state in football. We made a lot of trips to Louisburg just to watch him coach. The Louisburg people were very good to him. He has been a great son, brother, and father and we wish him the best in anything he decides to do and know he will do it well." – **Bob and Mary Rose Griffin, Gary's Parents.**

"Gary, I would hope you already know how I feel… but thank you so much for being in Konnor Cook and Kody Cook's lives – from t-ball to high school football. May your next journey be just as amazing and filled with memories." – **Anita Cook**

"Coach Griffin, just wanted to mention how much Daniel and Kristen have enjoyed having you as a Biology teacher. I would say you were a top favorite teacher for both kids. Kristen is really going to miss you as a track coach and she has had a great time. She thinks you are absolutely hilarious and you make her want to do better – not an easy feat with that one!" – **Debbie Bell**

"Coach Griff, I just want to wish you well in your future endeavors. Also, I would like to thank you for everything you did for me on and off the field .You made me a better person and I really do appreciate it. Louisburg is a better place for having you in it." – **Steven Brittingham**

"Thanks for all the Memories! Best Wishes Always!" – **Karen Williams**

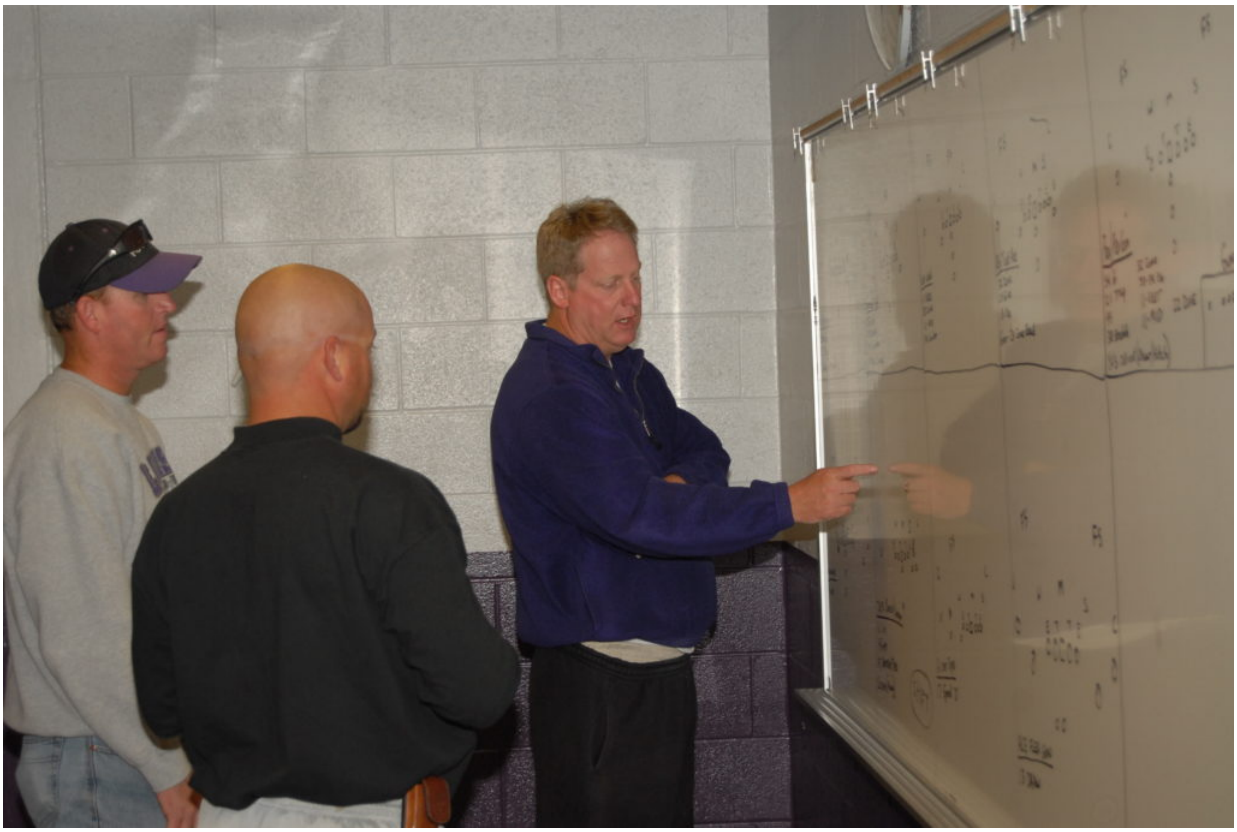
"Great teacher and great memories from A&P." – **Karmen DeGraeve**

“Last year I walked into LHS for the first time since 1998. Working as a staff member I was happy to see an old familiar face (Mind you – He does NOT age) and how strange to be working with one of my old high school teachers.

“I frequently had flashbacks to being a 16 year old sitting in his class dissecting that frog, or video days, or even seeing a test question I saw many, many years ago (when helping my current students.) Wow. How time has flown by and changed.

“Some things change but great teachers and coaches do not. You have impacted so many athletes and students. You will leave behind a legacy and memory too many at LHS and your shoes will be impossible to fill.

“Congratulations on sticking it out! You made it! Enjoy your retirement, your family and all their accomplishments. Wishing you the best!” – **Jamie (Manson) Ballard, Class of 1998.**



“I wanted to share a few memories of my time around Gary at Louisburg High.

“The greatest lesson he ever taught me…We were supposed to use the restroom during lunch and I came back to biology and immediately asked to use the restroom. He said yes (to my surprise) so I set my double chocolate chip muffin down on my desk and left. I came back to the whole class laughing and Griff licking his fingers. He had stuck his thumb right down the center of the muffin. He said “If you had gone to the bathroom during lunch, this wouldn’t have happened.” And I never made that mistake again.

He also repeatedly told kids if they wanted to be successful they should ‘do the opposite of Emily and you will be amazing in life.’ He was hilarious, real, smart, and sarcastic…and it was awesome. I look up to him as an educator.

On a more serious note…I grew up around Gentry and Garrett so I also grew up around Griff as well. He was the type of coach (I had him in track) that demanded your attention. I was scared to not do as he asked in fear of losing his respect. Now, as a teacher and coach, that demeanor is something I only dream to possess one day.

I wish him luck in this part of his life! Congratulations!” – **Emily Lemke, Class of 2011**

“Coach Griffin, best wishes as you move on to new challenges. Louisburg High, and the Frontier League, will be forever impacted because of your work as a teacher, coach and positive role model. I have always appreciated your honesty and candor. You knew where you stood with you – no deception or pettiness. Good luck and God bless.” – **Mike Dumpert, Paola Football**

“Thanks coach… You’ve done a great job with my kids and all the others… congrats on joining the retirement club…”- **David Johns**

“Nothing but the best to Coach Griffin! Cheers to you!!” – **Bryan Frank**

“One of the very best both on and off the field. Proud that you have had a positive influence on all 3 of my boys.” – **Connie Ewy**



“One of the best things that ever happened to Louisburg High School. Congrats Coach Griff!” – **Doug Richardson**

“Griff, I just want to thank you for doing your part in this community helping mold me, my brothers, my father, and the seemingly million other people you’ve connected with during your tenure at LHS. It was a true blessing to be coached (yelled at), mentored, and taught by you. I’m thankful our families were in close proximity because some of my favorite memories are shared with your two children. So thank you, congratulations, and good luck!” – **Justin ‘Bobby’ ‘Waterhead’ O’Brien**

“Having worked with Griff for the past 20 years, there are too many stories, too many memories, too many things I have learned from Gary to compile into a simple response. So I will simply say, thanks for being a colleague, mentor and most of all a good friend who has always there to offer support, advise or to simply listen. Thank you for everything you have done for me over the last 20 years. Good luck to you and your future endeavors. You will be greatly missed. Oh and by the way, I still hate 57 JET.” – **Darin Gagnebin, LHS Activities Director and former assistant football coach**

“Gary, I will miss most of all Sunday night game planning and the numerous talks we’ve had in the coaches office throughout the years. Good luck and God Bless!” – **Kyle Littrell, former LHS head and assistant football coach**

“Good luck and best wishes to a great coach and very nice person!!” – **Connie Dodson**

“Thank you so much for impacting my life in such a positive way. You are a huge reason why I decided to be a teacher and a coach” – **Alex Gentges, Class of 2011**

“Congrats Gary. You did a tremendous job!” – **Kate Sperfslage**

“He was the best teacher I’ve ever had.” – **Hannah Nelson**

“Congratulations and Best Wishes Gary, enjoy retirement!” – **Laura Gleason Roeder, Frankfort**



“I am an old friend that grew up with Gary. We started out playing summer baseball together and in junior high we started to form a friendship through sports. Gary was a year older than me so I looked up to him as a big brother. From junior high through high school, we formed a great friendship. We played together for two years on the varsity basketball and football teams at Frankfort High. There were some great games that we played in. One of the biggest was my junior and his senior year.

Frankfort had just switched leagues from the Blue Valley league to the Nemaha Valley league. Baileyville had been having a great run and were almost a shoe in every year to win it in football and basketball. We went to Baileyville on a Friday night and we were both rated at the top in the state and both undefeated. This game was being talked about all over the county and state. I’ll never forget the excitement in the air or the size of the crowd on both sidelines that night. People from all over had come to watch this showdown. The game played up to its hype. We would score and then they would and there were great plays made on both sides. Finally Baileyville took the lead from us late in the first half. There wasn’t much time and coach called Gary’s number and he ran a great route and even though they knew it was coming our QB made a great throw and Gary made the catch we knew he would and outran everyone to the end zone. That play put us back on top and gave us the momentum to keep the lead and win the greatest game that I was ever involved in.

Gary was always a leader and a coach on the field or court. I remember my sophomore year in basketball and he pulled me aside like he always did and he said Jay you need to shoot the ball more. He told me my shooting percentage was too high and I wasn’t shooting enough. Most kids would be thinking just get me the ball and not considering the team. I remember thinking back about Gary, I never had a doubt if he decided to be a coach someday that he would make a great one. There are many

more stories about Gary Griffin but this one is one of my favorites.” – **Jay Hiltgen, Frankfort**

“Congrats Griff!

Who would have thought when we met back in mid 80’s, both basically snot nosed coaches you would become a legend for all our kids who have come through your programs. Basketball, football and track, you have become legendary!! So many lives you’ve touched in the classroom and athletic fields. So many you have saved from going down that “bad road”. We’ve had many coaches who have helped so many over years and years of my life in Louisburg but your right there at the top with them all! Proud to call you a great friend! Been through a lot. You’re one of the greats my man!! Good luck!!” – **Doug Bowes**

“Griff – Some of my best memories from high school were in your class. Thanks for always making it fun. Your sarcasm cannot be matched! Hope you have a fun and relaxing retirement. You deserve it.” – **Katie Haas, Class of 2004**

“Coach Griffin,

Though it has been many years I wanted to thank you, like many of my classmates before and after me, for the contribution you made to my life. You do not know it but I still often recall the life lessons I learned from you and I thought I should share one of those. Perseverance! I will say that I took great pride in you calling on me during basketball practice. I knew I would never be a ‘starter’ but felt that you knew who to turn to when you needed heart! You were instrumental in teaching me about coming back from my knee injury, and though it would happen a second time, the conversation about giving

up the sport would teach me so much more. In that moment it was not about giving up basketball, it was about building character, patience, and adapting to continuing to help my team through personal struggle.

You know, it happened again in college? I had received a golf scholarship and needed another surgery. At that point when I had to talk to my collegiate coach I said I would be back. I had been through it before. I did just that. Though I feel I never returned to my full athletic capability I became a mentor to my peers. In those moments, in life moments, to this day I still reflect on the impact you made. You have touched so many lives, and you may not remember those exact moments, but always know I will.

Thank you, happy retirement!" – **Jon Xenos, Class of 2003**



"Quite simply, Coach Griff is one of my favorite people from Louisburg. I am so happy for all the success he had as a coach (and teacher and father). But he would probably tell you he had success as a coach when he quit having to coach 'athletes

like me’ and got to coach some kids with actual talent.

“I know I was on his first freshman basketball team that fall. Griff was also my position coach in football. Looking back, I just really looked up to Coach. He was so young and related so well to all of his players. He was never a yeller. He’d get irritated with you from time to time, but for the most part, he was calm and used humor so well to help get his points across. You really wanted to play hard for Coach Griff because you liked him so much. I wasn’t a good player or anything, but he instilled a great deal of confidence in me personally. Just a really great guy. He impacted so many lives in the Louisburg community. I am very proud of him and very happy for all his success.

“I remember when Garrett (his son) was born. I think it was my senior year. But it’s crazy how much present-day Garrett looks like what I remember Coach Griffin looking like when he came to Louisburg. So happy for all Garrett’s success and I know the pride Coach takes in his success.

“One funny story I still remember is Coach getting embarrassed in the classroom. He was my sophomore biology teacher and I remember how embarrassed he’d get when we had to cover human sexuality. His face would get bright red and then all the kids would start laughing and that would make him even more embarrassed. Griff was the kind of teacher you could mess with and he would flip you (stuff) back and you just felt like you were friends. You definitely respected him, but it wasn’t really an authority figure relationship, it was more like a big brother. Honestly, that’s a perfect way to describe Coach Griff. He’s been a Big Brother to hundreds, maybe thousands, of kids through the years.

“Even though I haven’t talked to Coach in probably at least five years, I want to express to him how much he meant to me and still does to this day. Congrats on the retirement and thanks for all you’ve done to make Louisburg a better place.”

– **Scott Cruce, Class of 1993**

“The thing I remember about Griff is that he treated me well on the basketball court even though I was the worst player on the team. I was lucky enough to go to a high school that didn’t have cuts, so I made the teams, but didn’t play a whole lot. Griff worked with me and made me a better player, even though he probably knew that I wouldn’t be on the court much during games. That has always meant a lot to me, especially now that I’m older and coach kids myself.

A good story about Coach Griff. When I was a junior and on junior varsity, we had kind of a riff with some of the varsity players. It built up during the year and was at a boiling point when we were playing at an away game. After the JV game, we were headed back into the locker room and one of my friends on varsity told me to be careful because the other varsity players had put shampoo in our shoes and boxers and stuff. After I checked and saw it was true, I made a beeline out of the locker room and was going to drag one of the varsity players out of the layup line and kick his (butt). Griff saw where I was headed and intervened. He calmed me down and then told me ‘Payback is hell.’ So I went back in and all of the JV players emptied their shampoo bottles into pretty much anything we could find of the guilty varsity players. We all ended up running a lot at practice the following day, but Griffin saved me from making a fool of myself in front of a lot of people.” – **Colby Jones, Class of 1992**



“I have coached with Griff, in one sport or another, for 19 years now. I had the privilege of playing football and basketball for him when I was in high school. You could guarantee that any team he coached was going to play hard and play the game the right way. He is a very modest man and doesn’t like being in the limelight, but has many accomplishments in the classroom and on the field.

Gary and his wife (Lori) raised two wonderful kids, Gentry and Garrett, who both emulate their same morals and values. Griff has not only been a coach and a mentor to me, but I also consider him to be a great friend as well. It is going to be different not seeing him around here next year, but I wish him nothing but the best as he continues this next phase of his career.” – **Jeff Lohse, LHS assistant football coach and former student**

“While I obviously wasn’t on the football team, I did have him in class and he’s still one of my favorites. Coach Griffin, I wish you nothing but the best of luck. Thank you for being such an amazing teacher. You’re one of the greatest ever!

My favorite memories from being in his class all revolve around his dry sense of humor and him making fun of me basically every day. Additionally, I had class with one of my best friends and whenever we/others in class were talking too much he wouldn’t even say anything, he’d just give us ‘the look’ and everyone would know to shut up. Haha! I can still picture it today. Only Griff can silence a room of high school students with no words.

He was a lot of fun to have as a teacher (even though he’d probably prefer to think he made us miserable. Lol!” – **Jaden Scott**

“Congratulations coach Griffin! Many years ago, when you would actually practice with the team, you were a positive influence to us all as you have been for many other student athletes over the years. Best wishes on your next chapter and hope you can enjoy some well-deserved time for yourself.” – **Jamie Waite, Class of 1992**

“Gary, Congratulations on your retirement. You will be missed at the school and on all the teams you coached. I am glad I was able to have your guidance in the classroom and in sports. It was a fun time for me when you were coaching and teaching. Thanks for everything.” – **Dennis Seck**

“Coach Griffin, I want to first congratulate you on a wonderful career at Louisburg High School. Thank you for the

lessons taught, kids guided, discipline instilled and being a mentor and father figure to many. Thank you for coaching Will in football and track. He has respected you and I appreciate all the things you have taught him. I pray for you and your family that you are blessed with a great 'retirement' from LHS. Thank you again and congratulations on a terrific career here in Louisburg! Best Wishes!" – **Robyn (Ridley) Estle**

"Gary, Congratulations on your well-deserved retirement! Thank you for all the wonderful memories from when our boys played football for you. So many good memories such as the game at Holton – I think that will forever be our favorite high school football game. We of course cherish the State game in 2007. the State Championship in 2010 – and even though it was a loss – that crazy game in Girard Justin's senior year.

We can't thank you enough for the enormous positive impact you had on our 3 sons. Our boys will always admire you and the work ethic you helped to instill in all the boys that you coached. We can only hope that someday their sons will have a football coach like you that they can look up to.

Thank you for all the time you spent away from your family so that you could give your all to our boys and Louisburg football. Your dedication to the football program built it into a State powerhouse and something the whole town could be proud of.

We wish you the best in the years ahead & know you are probably looking forward to a little slower pace come the fall. Thank you again!" – **Rusty and Cathy Jenkins**



“There are way too many memories to have to choose one, from little league baseball to our state championship in football in 2010. One that I’ll have with me the rest of my life though, came on the day in November 2010. I remember as Holton scored that last touchdown with the clock running out, it didn’t matter. Although we would’ve liked to kept them to just 10 points, a wins a win. 24-16 to be exact. As that clock ran out, everyone went crazy and started rushing the field. The first person I hugged was Kody, and then shortly after found my way to Griff. We embraced and for a man who shows little emotion, he was elated. We hugged and I said in his ear, “we did it coach.”

That win meant so much for Louisburg, the team, the community, the players before, etc., but among everything else, it meant a lot to Griff. He had been close in the past, but to be able to do it for him in 2010 was truly special. He put his heart

and soul into coaching us and he deserves all the credit. There are a lot of memories we shared from elementary school through high school, but I will never forget that one. I respect the heck out of that man. Wishing him all the best in whatever path he chooses next. And I just want to say thank you for all you did for me Griff." – **Nate Daugherty, Class of 2011**

"I have so many funny and great memories over the years with Coach Griff involving sports, plus academics. I'll share one from our Driver's Ed class that he taught; It was how he would zing students by asking aloud if they had checked the 'blinker fluid, and to make sure it's full!' before entering the car. And a couple of them fell for this (haha), but it was all in good fun.

I would like to say further though that Griff was one of the best motivators in coaching I have ever experienced being around. He flat out knew how to get all of us fired up and ready to compete each night. I had so much fun playing football those years! Best wishes moving forward and Go Wildcats!" – **Zach Hildreth, Class of 2010**

"Thanks for all the memories! You have been such a great coach and teacher. I will let you know Libby said, 'Of course he's leaving, I was supposed to get him next year!' She was disappointed that you were leaving. Best of luck on your new position and we will still see you across the street!!" – **Traci Storey**

"Gary Griffin – teacher and coach.

I asked Kinsey what she remembered about you and she

immediately related the story about biology class when you taught genetics. She said Drew would be lucky as he wouldn't go bald when he gets older but her kids will because of genetics. She was excited telling the story just the other day as she did when she came home from that freshman class all those years ago.

Thank you for being a coach and mentor to Drew. A very special thanks for the support you gave him when we lost Auston. I know Drew relied on you and the other coaches a great deal.

You have truly made a difference in a great many lives of young people in Louisburg. Thank you for fulfilling your calling and teaching. And you helped make Wildcat Stadium the place to be on Friday nights in the Burg. Wahoo!

Best of luck to you in your new challenge." – **Jean and Doug Carder**

"He saw the best in all of his athletes. I had him in track for 4 years. My best memory is when we broke the school record for the 4×800 at state. The team was Nathan Goodwin, Mark Sitek, Stephen McTeer and myself. It was the greatest experience ever. He pushed us every meet to challenge with Paola. Our regional meet was a tough meet that year. We finished in the top 4 to go to state.

Out of the 16 teams we were rated 12th going into the race. We knew as a team we could push for the record and Griff told us what each of us had to run to get the record and push for the medal stand. That was the greatest race any of us ran. It was all because of the belief that Griff had in us as a coach. When he told us our splits, he had the biggest smile on his face. I will never forget that day. It's all because of him and challenging us every day." – **Jamison Parkhill**



“I remember a skinny little kid fresh out of college who came to Louisburg to take the biology job from the monster Meek. It took him a few years to jump into the ranks of coaching, but when he did, it was with both feet. I see in Gary one of the finest most understanding coaches that a high school can have on its staff. My son played for Gary I know the respect and admiration he felt, enough so that he was inspired to coaching as a career. In fact, you could say Gary was his mentor. I have had a lot of fun with Gary over the years and I am honored to have him as a friend and a fellow coach. Gary is a great, great family man and a great, great coach.” – **Lee and Sherry Littrell**

“Congrats Mr. Griffin! It doesn’t seem like you could be old enough to retire. Then again it doesn’t seem possible that’s it’s been about 27 years since I was in your class! Enjoy your

retirement.” – **Becky Jo Howell-Kosters**

“One of my favorite memories was the time Griff cheated and beat me in an arm wrestling match.” – **Mason Koechner, Class of 2017**

“Congratulations Gary!” – **Dara Stambaugh**

“I will forever be grateful to Griff for so many things, but a couple jump out to me.

He was my basketball coach, and the experience of being on the 1999 sub-state championship team is one that I greatly cherish. He was such a wonderful leader for us. He was great with the x’s and o’s, and he was an excellent motivator. But when we were over thinking things or asking too many questions, his patented response of ‘Play basketball’ is one that I still use to this day. I also loved some of his friendly conversations with officials, and his ability to partially mask his frustration (with us or the officials) by yelling into a towel.

He has given me so much helpful advice about teaching, coaching, parenting, and life in general. And since he is a decorated teacher and coach who has an amazing family, I felt like I was very privileged to receive this inside information. He sometimes is a man of few words, but those words carry a lot of weight. When he talks, people listen, and he is deeply respected by so many. I am truly, unbelievably fortunate to have been coached by him and to teach with him. He is a legend in my book.” – **Jarrod Worthington, LHS Math Teacher**

“I appreciate all the great memories you allowed me to earn at Louisburg High School and beyond. From in the classroom and on the track, you were truly a great mentor. Thanks for pushing me hard and helping me become a sprinter at Iowa State University while earning that Chemical Engineering degree. I would have never guessed that would happen and it definitely wouldn’t have happened without you. Thanks again Coach Griff and Congrats!” – **Mark Sitek, Class of 2011**



“From little league baseball through high school football, there have been so many memorable (State Championship 2010) and some not-so-memorable (halftime vs Baldwin 2010) moments with you, coach. You taught us the importance of being disciplined, being on time and doing things the right way. You taught me how to work hard, that I can ALWAYS do one more rep. Most importantly, you taught me that quitting is never an option and everything in life is earned. I am forever grateful of your leadership and how you have impacted my life. I’d still run through a brick wall for you coach! Enjoy ‘Retirement’ Coach Griff!” – **Ross Dvorak, Class of 2011**

“Congratulations Coach! I had mixed emotions when I heard you are retiring but I’m excited to see what you choose to do next. The biggest thing I realized is I need to give you a call and catch up, it has been way to long since we got together.

“I consider myself very fortunate to have been able to learn so much about the game of football from you, both as a player and a fellow coach. I always had so many great memories of playing for you and the other coaches growing up, and now I have even better memories of being a part of your staff. I’m not sure I could thank you enough for bringing me on board as a coach and being so flexible to allow me to stay around for as long as I did. Those were some great years, and I can honestly say you went from one of my old coaches to one of my great friends. I treasure those coaching years even more than my playing days, and those were some of the best years of my life.

It would be difficult to find another person that has given more to the town and student athletes of Louisburg than you have over the past 30 years. Thank you for everything you did to help shape me into the person I am today. As a high school kid I didn’t appreciate how much time and energy you and the other coaches put in to make us successful. I know now how hard that must have been not spending as much time with your own family, so thank you so much for that. You always seemed to a wonderful job of balancing helping the athletes with helping Lori raise your own children, and what a wonderful job you two did.

I have high hopes for your retirement years, mostly I hope you finally learn how to golf well, maybe work on that belly a little bit, and most importantly I hope Lori doesn’t kill you for being home too much!!!! The Neff’s miss you guys so much and we need to get together to celebrate. We will forever

remember those Friday nights at the Griffin House!!!!

Congratulations to the best coach I know, an amazing teacher, a great father and husband, a fantastic role model, and wonderful friend!!!" – **Billy Neff**

"To think of the impact you have had on the Louisburg community for the past 30 plus years as a teacher and coach is amazing. It is incredible how many people's lives you have impacted in a positive way. Obviously, you have had a major impact on my life. I want to thank you for helping me, as well as every other student or player you have taught or coached, understand the value of hard work, commitment, and perseverance. Thinking of the impact you have had on the community was one of the main motivators for me deciding to transition into teaching and coaching. I know that if at the end of my career, I have had half of the impact you have had, I will have done well for myself. Thanks again for all you have done for me as well as all of Louisburg." – **Drew Harding**

"Gary and I started at Louisburg High School the same year. It was both of our first teaching jobs so I got to know Gary well. Gary has always been one to stay out of the spotlight, never wanting any praise for anything. He was a very gifted teacher and coach. He was always the students' favorite because he related so we'll to them and truly cared about them. He was a type of coach the athletes played and worked hard for. That was the expectation he set and they didn't want to disappoint him.

Gary's successes speak for themselves. What people forget that Gary was a very good basketball coach early in his coaching career. I firmly believe Gary was one of the very few guys that had the knowledge and stamina to be a head coach in all the 3 sports and win championships in them all. After going to

Osawatomie I tried hiring Gary many times to coach and teach with me. Gary will be truly someone you can't replace. His humble demeanor and willingness to do anything that is asked in the classroom and in the coaching arena separates him from most. I wish Gary the very best!" – **Doug Chisam, Osawatomie High School Principal**



"Coach Griff was a great influence to all of the students and athletes who had the privilege of learning from him. He helped me, along with countless others, develop the work ethic that has allowed us to succeed in many other aspects of life outside of the classroom and off the field. Wish you nothing but the best in retirement. Thanks for everything coach!" – **Dain Glenn, Class of 2013**

"Congratulations! Thank you for being a strong motivator and

encouragement in not only the sports you coached, but for the others I played as well. It takes a special person to do what you've done. Louisburg is lucky to have the Griffin family!" – **Madison (Wertz) Sanders, Class of 2011**

"Best wishes coach, thanks for all the memories!" – **Wes Hutson**

"Coach Griffin, It was an honor and a privilege to be able to grow up around you and your family. I can't express how grateful I am to have had you as a coach and mentor. Thank you for all that you have given to this city!" – **Nate Goodwin**

"Gary, I have so many memories of you because of your daughter, Gentry, being my best friend from age 7 up to now. Some of my fondest include – you being patient with us strolling down the street playing our clarinets, going to football games and watching you lead the team to victory (Gent was always so proud to claim that you were her dad), going on an 18 hour car ride to Arizona with the fam, you giving me tips with track and basketball, seeing you teach Gent and Drew and mostly you being a great male influence!" – **Taylor Brown**



“Coach Griff,

I can’t even begin to thank you enough for putting up with us in AP Bio as we made sure the fish was fed (because you claimed you were trying to kill it by starving it to death).

I appreciate you not judging my morbid moment of tearing through the dissection frog skull 10 seconds before class was over (had to get its brain for the few extra credit points!).

Thank you for at least pretending to have faith in my athletic abilities by always allowing me to run hurdles even though odds were against me to stay on my feet the whole race.

Most of all, thank you for so many great memories, successes in the classroom and on the field, all the laughs, and of course the life lessons (I'll just assume there were a few good lessons in there somewhere). You will be missed for sure, but life has so much more ahead for you! Good luck and congratulations on retirement!" – **Chelsea (Morland) Bell, Class of 2009**

"Griff, Congratulations on your new journey and thanks for not flunking me after I licked the dissection frog in AP Bio for $10." – **Jesse Morland, Class of 2011**

"Griff,

Thank you so much for being an awesome teacher!! Your class was one of the few classes I actually looked forward to going to everyday, minus the dissections, I wasn't a fan of those.

I also wasn't a fan of you during track. You may find it hard to believe, but you're kind of a really mean looking person when you yell.

All in all, you were a pretty alright teacher and coach and I just want to thank you for not letting your predetermined opinions about Chelsea and Jesse alter your love for me. Let's be honest, they were terrible students and we all know I was the favorite Morland.

Thank you again for everything you've done for me and for all of Louisburg, you will be greatly missed! Congratulations on retirement, you don't look a day over 30!" – **Kalli Morland, Class of 2014**

"Griff, Congratulations on your retirement! I am very fortunate to not only have had you as a coach and as a teacher, but as a role model and someone to look up to. Your devotion, passion and integrity has influenced me more than you'll ever know. Thank you for investing in me, encouraging me, and for showing me what it looks like to work hard, be resilient, and never give up. The values you instilled in me will set me apart in all my endeavors. Forever grateful." – **Will Garza, Class of 2014**

"Griff,

Congratulations on your many years of service and dedication to the community! I wish you nothing but the best in your next endeavor. You have been a fantastic teacher and amazing coach to so many people over the years, myself included. Some of my fondest memories from my time at Louisburg have you in them. From Biology class to the brutal conditioning days at the beginning of track season to the numerous track meets, you were an integral piece as well as someone I continue to tell friends and family about when I am sharing stories. Thank you for all that you did for me and the many other lives you have had an impact on over your tenure. You were by far and hands down one of my favorite teachers and coaches I have ever had! All The Best!" – **Liz Mortensen, Class of 2007**



“One of the things I’ve remember about having Griff as a coach is he would always be honest with you, whether you liked what he had to say or not. It taught us that if what we were doing wasn’t good enough, then to keep working harder until it was good enough. Lots of respect for you coach and I wish you the best of luck!” – **Wyatt Sander, Class of 2014**

“I played football and track for Coach Griff. He was always a great balance of tough love and consideration. He pushed me to become better in not just my athletics but also in my everyday life. I’ll never forget driving back from the State Track Meet my senior year with a few other seniors and Griff and just talking about our coming futures as we were all headed off to do different things. Then Griff missed our exit and we got to talk for an extra 30 minutes. Griff made an incredibly positive impact on my life, so I wish him the best in all of his future endeavors.” – **Mason Wilde, Class of 2015**

“I played football under coach Griffin for four years at Louisburg High School. My senior year of football we were playing Eudora in the playoffs to go to substate and all game their quarterback had been tearing apart our defense. On this specific third down, their quarterback’s last name was Ballock, and he got the ball and proceeded to make it past our front line of the defense and into the secondary where I was playing safety. He gave me a move and completely juked me out of my shoes. Once we were able to stop them on that drive, I went to the sidelines and Griff comes up to me and says, “Do I need to put somebody else out there?!” I’ve never been more frightened in my life by coach Griff, because I knew he was serious.

We ended up losing the game and ending my senior season, however, once we got to the locker room and we had our post-game discussion. Griff comes up to me grinning and chuckling and says, “I like a little fight.” He and I had always had a serious coach-player relationship and it helped ease the feeling of my senior season ending to see him in high spirits and laughing about something that had happened during a, not so pretty, game. Best wishes to coach Griffin in his retirement and further chapter in life. I wouldn’t be the man I am today if it weren’t for his leadership and guidance as I became a young man.” – **Chris Chase, Class of 2013**



“One story that I always laugh about is after the state championship game in 2010, and I asked him why he looked so red faced and grouchy on the sidelines during the first part of the game. He said he was fighting some indigestion from the pregame meal at Sirloin Stockade! And I thought all along that he was nervous about the game!

Good luck Griff and thanks for your years of service as a coach and a teacher.” – **Mark “Bubble” Hildreth**

“Entering my sophomore year of football I definitely was not the biggest player on the team and in fact I was known for being short and fast, so coach Griffin originally gave me the nickname ‘rabbit’ just because the best thing I could do was run. Then one practice when teammates said I need to be angry, I decided to try it with the freshman team (class of 2016). It

was a simple option play when I was on defense, the result was me shaking off the wide receiver and plowing through the runner, which through adrenaline I ended up starting to growl and Griffin told me to ‘growl again’ roughly 3 times then yelling ‘that’s the god damn honeybadger’ and the whole team erupted and from that day on Coach Griffin gave me that extra confidence of having a threatening nickname making those last 3 years very memorable having that title beside my name. Thank you Coach Griffin for giving momentum to add to my name!” – **Zach Knox, The Louisburg Honey Badger**

“Congratulations Teacher/Coach Griff on your retirement. Thank you for the hours you poured into our lives teaching and coaching. Enjoy your family!! God Bless!” – **Cris and Samantha Pritchard**

“Hey Griff – the Hupp’s would like to wish you the best as you enter a new chapter. All of our boys will cherish the special bonds you developed with them! You had a way of bringing out the best in them. You are a very special teacher/coach and will be missed!! We will all remember how charismatic and chatty you were too!! – **The Hupp Family**

“Congrats on your own journey, coach. Louisburg Football has a special place in all our hearts. As I age, I’m consistently reminded how great my LHS coaches were. A lot about life can be learned on the football field. Personally, it prepared myself. Everyday is a great day to get better! Sending best wishes from Florida.” – **Chad Renner #22**



“Coach Griffin,

Best of luck with everything in the future. You are a great man and leader, not just for me, but for all the students you had the opportunity to have. You will be deeply missed! I will miss your advice and conversations more than you know. Thank you again for everything and I wish you and your family nothing but the best!” – **Kyle Conley, LHS Teacher and Soccer Coach**

“The great thing about Coach Griffin was his support of students at LHS and his support for a total high school experience by the students.

In 2005 the Louisburg FFA National Food Science team had the starting center/defensive lineman, starting wide receiver/defensive back and the team’s long snapper. Coach

Griffin supported their decision to miss a **district game** and attend the National FFA Convention. He told the boys they worked hard and earned the right to go and he would not hold that against them.

In 2006 two Louisburg FFA members who started both ways chose to attend the National FFA Convention and participate in the Food Science Contest. They missed the **district game against Paola.** Again Coach Griffin applied no pressure. This also happened in 2003, 2009, and 2011.

Treating players with support and respect rather than dominating them by fear might be why he has taken teams deep into state playoffs and winning the 2010 State Championship.

While sports certainly can enhance the high school experience so do many other activities. My desire is that all coaches and parents look at sports the way Coach Griffin does…a part of a total program. Congratulations Coach Griffin in your retirement from LHS." – **Jim Morgan, LHS FFA Adviser**

"My favorite memory of Coach Griffin is when we were coming home from winning a state championship in track. I actually saw Griff dancing to the music at the gas station when we were fueling up. He was a great mentor and awesome coach who enjoys his time with the kids. Good Luck Griff." – **Greg Darrington, girls track and field coach**

"One story I can share about my coaching experience with Gary was a few years ago when he returned to coach basketball at the middle school level. Gary had previously been the head boys basketball coach at LHS years earlier. I was excited to have his years of experience to help out with the group of seventh graders that year. His coaching assignment was with the JV. I had varsity. Prior to the season, I had warned Gary

about the discrepancy between coaching high school varsity and middle school JV. He vowed to me that he was going to take a patient, more laid-back approach with this level.

Everything was going well until about halfway through the season, when I could tell his expectations were not being met, and he was growing more frustrated. It all came to a head one night when his players were playing uninspired basketball and his patience was wearing thin. He emerged from the locker room at halftime by himself and sat down on the bench with his arms crossed and legs extended. I asked him if he was ok. Like a man that had just 'fallen off the wagon' he shook his head back and forth and replied in a rather disappointed, but relieved tone… 'Well, I did it!' He had chewed on his players for their poor performance. It appeared to be good therapy for him and his players for the remainder of the season. They turned it around and finished out the season strong….

Best of Luck Gary in your future endeavors!" – **John Ozier, LMS basketball coach**



“Congratulations Griff! Thanks for your words of wisdom over the years!” – **Jessica Compliment, LHS Volleyball Coach**

“I just wanted to thank Griff for everything he has done for me and taught me in the past six years. As well as when I was a substitute teacher in this district 10 years ago for the advice he was willing to give to a young educator whom he owed absolutely nothing too. Best of luck!” – **Robert Ebenstein, LHS head football coach**

“Best wishes to Gary. It has been a pleasure to work with you these many years. I appreciate you allowing me to be a part of

the program. I have always admired the way that you handle the student athletes. There have been many occasions that I recall, but there are two that really stick out to me.

First, is the way you bravely protected Coach Lohse and Coach Ebenstein when we found the UPS driver stranded in KCK. Secondly, I have seen you handle many situations that were above and beyond what a coach is required. There have been times when the student needed football more than football needed them. Also, spending time with a young man and his family during crisis, even while preparing for the playoffs. You are a good man, Gary." – **Damon Dennis, LHS Athletic Trainer**

"My junior year of track I believe I was sick to school one day that happened to be when everyone had to try out for the relays. I was a lazy jumper and knew I wouldn't be running anyway. So at the first meet he threw me in the 400 as punishment. I still have to get him back. He is a great person and a great coach. Thank you!" – **Jacob Herbert**

"Hi Griff, I never had you as a teacher, despite growing up here in Louisburg, but I want to thank you for being there for Quinn, not just as a coach but as a really inspiring teacher. He has been so disinterested in school from the get-go, but your class really turned him on to science and biology. He learned and retained so much and it is driving him into health sciences after high school.

Of course, thank you for the incredible amount of your life that you have given to Quinn, through track, and to all of the kids that have moved through Louisburg athletics. The way you relate to the students is very special and your presence here will be greatly missed." – **Lesley Rigney**

“On behalf of the entire Dvorak family, we thank you for teaching Ryan, Ross and Bailey not only the subject of Biology, but also providing an example of great work ethic. Winning state football in 2010 will always be a special memory. Watching the development of our boys into young men and inspiring them to work towards a goal was instrumental. We so appreciate your listening ear, encouraging all three of our kids to further their love of sports to play at the next level. USD 416 will not be the same without Coach Griff. Peace to you as you journey on.” – **The Dvorak Family**



“To a great teacher and awesome coach! Congratulations and I wish you the best in the future!” – **Linda Haight**

“Coach Griff has been my track coach for the past 4 years. He has taught me to push myself so that I can become a better

runner and he has challenged me to strive as an athlete. Something he has always said to me is ‘running is one thing that, you get out of it, what you put into it.’ Track has really shown through to that. I want to thank him for allowing me to find myself in a sport because he was there to push me to do my best and run hard. The past 4 years of track have been successful because of him and I can’t thank him enough for providing that opportunity for me.” – **Kaitlyn Gaza, Class of 2017**

“Griff has always been a positive role model. From a young age, I watched him coach my brother and other Wildcat football players knowing that’s who I wanted to be. Over the course of 4 years in the football and track programs, Griff has transformed me not only as an athlete, but as a person. He knows how to work hard and get the best out of each athlete that wants to compete for him. If you’re willing to put in the work, he will lead you to success.

There is nothing negative to be said about Gary Griffin and those who disagree are blind to the amount of passion and care he puts into his work. I will never forget my time as a Louisburg Wildcat, and much of that I have Griff to thank for. I wish you the best of luck wherever you may end up, but I know you will always be able to call Louisburg home. You have certainly left your mark on this small town and those who have been through it.” – **T.J. Dover, Class of 2017**

“My favorite memory of Griff is more of a summation of memories. Anyone who knows him well or has been coached by him has seen how nervous he gets before football games on Friday night. You can see it on his expressions and hear it when speaks. But it was never nervousness based out of fear, it was an eagerness to start every game. As soon as the game starts,

his demeanor immediately shifts to one of intense focus, but also collected. At that time he is completely immersed in the present. No matter the circumstance, opponent or score, he always seemed to have the same joy and excitement to be around the game of football.

From a work ethic standpoint, there are very few people that have taught me as much as Griff. I know when I decide I want something, there is no one that will outwork me for it. Working hard for my goals comes as second nature now, and that is a result of being a player and student under Gary Griffin." – **Ashton Dover, Class of 2010**

"Griff, You have made an impact on so many lives not only in the classroom but on the field. I'm so glad I got the opportunity to be a football trainer. I had the time of my life and I will always remember it. Thank you for always being someone that everyone could count on, no matter the situation. Louisburg won't be the same without you. Thank you for everything." – **Ali Dover**

"I just wanted to give Coach Griff a special thank you for taking the time to coach my son, Chris Williams. Coach Griff has been a wonderful mentor and I appreciate him taking the time to teach my son certain tools and techniques within track. I know Chris will miss him. Best Wishes and enjoy!" – **Jennifer Post**

"Lots of great memories of games and stats keeping for you and staff. Best wishes for whatever the future holds. Lots of fun times." – **Don Stowell**

“Setting…LHS…your first year teaching Biology. Not only were you the new kid on the block filling Don Meek’s Biology class ‘shoes’, but you were ‘fighting off’ your adoring female students!! I remember at the end of the day your slumping in the chair next to my desk thinking you’d never survive!! But you did survive, and thrive!!

You’ve positively impacted hundreds of kids’ lives in ways you may never know. You encouraged me when I decided to finally get my BSN. I’d have never passed Bio & Chem without you and Bill, let alone finish my degree!!

Being on the football sidelines watching and listening to you coach, teach, discipline, and build the tradition – Louisburg Football – was a privilege that we cherish. So many exciting times! Winning state 2010 was such a beautifully indelible memory. Thanks for the memories, Gary!! Go make more!! Love you and Lori and your great kids!!” – **Carolyn Stowell**

“Griff – Some of my best memories from high school were in your class. Thanks for always making it fun. Your sarcasm cannot be matched! Hope you have a fun and relaxing retirement. You deserve it.” – **Katie Haas, Class of 2004**

“Thanks Gary for being an awesome role model and football coach to Zach and a great friend to us. We are so happy for you and wish you all the best.” – **Jenny DuBois**



“Best Wishes Mr. Griffin, one awesome teacher and a heck of a coach. Thank you for all your years as a Wildcat.” – **Stacy Horn**

“Congratulations!! You have been a great coach for the

Louisburg Wildcats!” – **Rowena Jahansouz**

“Thanks for all the great Wildcat football years!! Enjoyed watching the Cats play. You will be missed!!!” – **Juanita Browning Stone**

“Mr. Griffin coached my 5th grade basketball team, taught me high school biology, AP biology, and was my high school track coach. Also, Gentry and Garrett were in the grade above and below me and are both my friends. All that to say, Griff probably got to spend more time with me than he was really interested to.

One time, when I was a high school senior in Griff’s AP biology class, I decided I would try a joke out on him that I heard on the Office. I think we were dissecting something, and I said to Griff, ‘Hey, does it smell like Up Dog to you in here?’ and Griff looked at me like I was an idiot (I was) and said ‘What the hell is up dog?’ I laughed so much harder than the joke warranted and said, ‘Not much Griff! What’s up with you??’ He rolled his eyes and walked away. I share that story because I think, it might capture Griff. Unruffled and mostly unamused by the general stupidity of 17 year olds.

Griff is not effusive. As my high school track coach, he signed me up for the 400m. That race was basically hell. It was a race where you had to trick your body into thinking it could sprint for a quarter of a mile. After Griff spent weeks making fun of me because I couldn’t figure out how to use starting blocks, I ran the race in a meet. I ran it as hard as I possibly could and I’m pretty sure I was so winded I couldn’t talk afterwards. Griff was waiting at the finish line and said, with the most inflection I’d ever heard in his voice, ‘Now that is how you run a 400m!’ I think that was 8 years ago and I still remember. I still remember because with

Griff, praise did not come easy or cheap. Griff had our respect, and he'd earned it. He made us do our best, run harder than we wanted to, and when we'd worked so hard we finally stopped talking, he said 'Good job.' I think it takes a pretty special person to coax that kind of effort out of high schoolers. Griff made it look easy for a long time. Louisburg will miss him!" – **Carlie Houchen**

"Oh my brother Gary! Even when I think about him I tear up for some reason. I think it's simply because he is 'that guy.' That guy that I always turn to when I need to talk about my own life and the life of my children. That guy who I have always looked up to and wanted to make proud of me. That guy I always tell all the people I work with and all the people in Scott City about because I am that proud of him.

That guy who is as selfless as it comes and is one heck of a class act! "That guy who has set the standard high for other teachers and coaches when it comes to integrity. That guy who expects the most of his students and athletes and gives it in return. He is the best brother any person could ever ask for and I wish him the very best of everything!!" – **Susan Kite, Gary's sister**



“Dad, it is incredible the impact that you have had on the Louisburg community in the 30 plus years you have been here! You have touched so many lives as both a teacher and a coach, teaching not only biology and plays, but also life skills like hard work, leadership, teamwork, discipline, determination, respect, and responsibility. Not many people can say they had their dad as a driver’s ed instructor, teacher, and coach, but I loved having that experience!

It wasn’t always easy to share you with the whole town of Louisburg. There were times when you had to sacrifice time with your own family to spend time with your players watching film, practicing, or being at games. I am so proud of all you have accomplished in your career as a teacher and a coach, but more importantly, I am proud to call you my dad! Love, Gent” – **Gentry (Griffin) Harding**

“Gary, it’s hard to believe it’s been 32 years. Time really does fly. The community of Louisburg has been so kind and supportive to our family and a great place to raise our kids.

You have taught and coached hundreds of amazing kids and your message has always been for them to be responsible, get a good

education, be kind and always do the right thing…You have definitely left an impression on many.

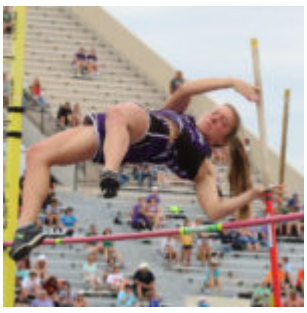
We have had a couple low and hard years but mostly highs….2010!!! You finally got the monkey off your back.

Hopefully the best is yet to come!!! Congratulations!! Love you!

PS…still waiting on the swimming pool!!" – **Lori Griffin**

"Hey Griff, we have one question for you before you go….do you know who won the Spring Hill/De Soto game? Just let us know. Thanks Griff! Appreciate it!" – **LHS Football Staff**

Holtzen, Dover earn state medals to lead Wildcats



Louisburg junior Isabelle Holtzen clears a height in the pole vault Saturday at the Class 4A Kansas State Track and Field Championships in Wichita. Holtzen earned her first state medal after she finished seventh in the event.

WICHITA – Isabelle Holtzen and T.J. Dover left the state track meet last season knowing they just missed out on a state medal.

That feeling stuck with them for about a year and they weren't about to let it happen for a second straight time.

Holtzen and Dover each earned a state medal last weekend at the Class 4A Kansas State Track and Field Championships at Wichita State University to lead Louisburg. The top eight in each event medal.

Holtzen competed in the pole vault Saturday morning and finished seventh overall after she cleared 10 feet. The Louisburg junior finished one spot away from a medal last season and was happy to be able to bring something home with her from Wichita.

"After I was done, I went and talked to coach (Andy) Wright and he told me he thought I medaled, but he told me to go ask to make sure I got seventh," Holtzen said. "I was just so excited and all smiles that I could barely contain it."

The state medal capped what was a special season for Holtzen. Earlier in the year she broke a 15-year old school record after she cleared 11 feet, 1 inch.

Holtzen competed in a tough pole vault field at state, including going up against Paola's Samantha Van Hoecke, who won a state title after she cleared 12-6 and broke a state meet record.

"Going into state track always makes me nervous because the meet is so big compared to any of our other meets," Holtzen said. "I was really hoping to vault my PR, or go at least 10-6 again, so I was a little disappointed when I got 10. At the same time, I was OK with it because I knew I gave everything I had.

“After being able to break the school record and get a medal at state, I know that I have to work hard this summer and throughout next year to be able to match the season I had. It definitely motivates me to work even harder. Now that the season is over, I am extremely sad because it has been so much fun thanks to my teammates and coaches. I can’t wait till next year to hopefully continue to improve and have even more success.”

As for Dover, the Louisburg senior went into his final state meet with a few less nerves than last season. That experience seemed to pay off for Dover as he finished eighth overall in the discus with a throw of 143-4.



T.J. Dover finished eighth in the discus Friday at the Class 4A Kansas State Track and Field Championships in Wichita.

“I wouldn’t say I am satisfied with it because I really wanted to hit a PR, but a state medal is something I have been chasing since last year when I kind of choked at state,” Dover said. “It has been in the back of my mind all year, but I am blessed to come out here and have the opportunity to compete, especially with this only being my second year of track. I feel a lot of pride to be able to represent Louisburg on the podium.”

Dover threw in the first flight of the competition and recorded a throw of 141-6 in his final attempt. Then he had to sit and wait for the second flight to throw.

He continued to watch as a few of those throwers hadn’t surpassed his best mark, which gave him hope he was able to make the finals. Dover ended up with the seventh-best throw in the two flights and made it in.

“It was super nerve-racking,” he said. “I honestly didn’t think I got in until they said my name.

“For the circumstances, I thought I threw pretty well. The ring was pretty slick and I struggled to keep my balance. Toward the end of the throws, I started to realize I needed to make a move to try and get in the finals. It feels good to finally get a medal.”



Senior Ben Hupp runs down the straightaway during the final leg of the 4×800-meter relay Saturday in Wichita.

Louisburg just missed out on getting more state medals in two events.

On Friday, sophomore Chris Williams finished ninth in the 400-meter dash in 51.98 seconds and missed getting into the finals by one spot.

The 4×800-meter relay of Williams, Wyatt Reece, Tanner Belcher and Ben Hupp did the same on Saturday. The relay ran in the top eight through the first two laps of the race, but couldn't hold their spot and took ninth in 8 minutes and 31.23 seconds.

Junior Kaitlyn Urban finished a couple spots out of the finals as she recorded a leap of 33-1 in the triple jump and finished 11th overall.

A week after winning a regional title, junior Quinn Rigney ran

a time of 11.47 seconds in the 100-meter dash to come in 12th at state and fellow junior Frankie Hurst cleared 11-6 in the pole vault to take 13th.



Senior Kaitlyn Gaza hands the baton off to teammate Kaitlyn Urban Friday during the 4×100-meter relay.

The boys 4×400 relay team of Williams, Blue Caplinger, Hupp and Rigney took 12th in 3:30.33, while the girls 4×100 relay of Kaitlyn Gaza, Urban, Haley Cain and Jordon Leach was 13th in 52.99 seconds.

Jackson Ewalt, Caplinger, Charlie Koontz and Rigney finished 16th in the boys 4×100 relay in 45.45 seconds to round out the Louisburg state qualifiers.

Wildcat track qualifies for state in 10 events



Louisburg junior Quinn Rigney (left) edges Osawatomie's Will Thompson and Paola's Andrew Phillips at the finish line of the 100-meter dash Friday during the Class 4A regional meet at Paola High School. Rigney won the regional title in the event and qualified for three events at state.

PAOLA – With runners right on their heels, Quinn Rigney and Chris Williams didn't buckle on the pressure.

A regional title was on the line for both runners, and despite a late charge from their competition, both athletes left the Class 4A regional meet in Paola on Friday with a first-place medal and a spot at the state meet.

Rigney won the regional title in the 100-meter dash in 11.07 seconds in a near photo finish as he edged Paola's Andrew Phillips by .02 seconds.

"I was honestly kind of surprised because I think I was seeded fourth or something like that," Rigney said. "The weather wasn't that good, but I still can't believe that I won. It feels good though."

Williams captured the 400-meter dash crown in 50.90 seconds and held off Frontenac's Brendan Ishimura who ran a 51.10.

"The first 200 was pretty good, but the second 200 I started to die a little bit," Willliams said. "Then the one kid came up from behind me. At the last 10 meters I wasn't going to let him beat me, and I wanted it more and snagged it from him.

"This makes me feel like I can do a lot better now that I have gotten my time down to 50. Hopefully I can get back to 50 or lower next week."



Louisburg sophomore Chris Williams won the regional title in the 400-meter dash and qualified for state in three events.

It was the start of a big day for the Wildcat track and field team. Louisburg qualified for state in 10 events total and is

also sending four relays between the girls and boys teams. The top four finishers in each event at regionals earned a spot at state.

Rigney and Williams will each be competing in three events for the Wildcats as they are each a part of two relays.

Williams, along with Tanner Belcher, Jacob Benne and Ben Hupp, ran to a personal record in the 4×800-meter relay with a time of 8 minutes and 30.61 seconds to finish in third. Williams, Rigney, Hupp and Blue Caplinger took third in the 4×400 in 3:32.40.

Rigney, Jackson Ewalt, Caplinger and Charlie Koontz qualified in the 4×100 as came fourth in 44.9 seconds. The Wildcat team was sitting in sixth place in the final handoff, but Rigney sprinted them back to fourth place.

“Quinn had a great day,” Louisburg boys coach Gary Griffin said. “After having a couple of rough meets in a row, I thought he really stepped up. I was pleased with the relays, especially the 4×100 who ran a PR. Those kids have worked hard this year and it was nice to see them get a chance to go to state.

“Chris is in really good shape right now and I would hope that he could go out there and make the finals at state. No one in the state has broken 50 seconds this year, and I think he has the capabilities to do that. He has been there before so it is not a new experience, so we will see what happens.”



Louisburg senior Ben Hupp hands the baton off to teammate Quinn Rigney during the 4×400-meter relay.

The Louisburg girls will also take a relay to state as the 4×100 team of Kaitlyn Gaza, Kaitlyn Urban, Haley Cain and Jordan Leach ran their best of the season and took third overall in 53.10 seconds.

Gaza, a senior, will make her fourth trip to the state track meet and is excited about one last chance to compete on the big stage.

“It means a lot,” Gaza said. “I have qualified for state in something the last three years and I thought it would be awful if I missed it my last year. Once I saw the 4×100 pull through, I just thought ‘Oh my goodness.’ It is another opportunity for me to do something again.”



Kaitlyn Gaza gets hug from 4×100 teammate Jordon Leach following their third place finish in the event. This will be Gaza's fourth trip to state.

The Wildcats also qualified in several field events, including three runner-up finishes.

Senior T.J. Dover picked a good time to have his best meet of the season as he took second in the discus with a season-best throw of 147 feet, 4 inches and was less than a foot behind

Prairie View’s Justin Peine for a regional title.

Dover qualified for state last season in the event and is hoping to leave there with a medal in his final meet.

“T.J. threw a personal record for this year and hopefully he can get a PR again this week,” Griffin said. “If he does that, it may get him a medal.”

After setting a personal record in the triple jump the prior three meets, junior Kaitlyn Urban almost did it again at regionals. Urban had a leap of 33-6.5 to take second and she is looking forward to taking part in her first state meet

“It means a lot to me because I put in a lot of work to improve over the summer and during the year,” Urban said. “I have been working on a lot of running mechanics and speed to try and get my jumps farther and have been working a lot on technique. I am just super excited for it. This is my first year running the 4×100 too, and I am really proud of the team for working on their times and getting a personal record to go to state.”



Junior Kaitlyn Urban stretches out for a mark in the triple jump Friday during the Class 4A regional meet. Urban took second overall.

Junior Isabelle Holtzen will make her third consecutive trip to the state meet in the pole vault. After setting the school record in the pole vault a month ago, Holtzen had hit a couple bumps along the way.

Holtzen rebounded to finish second at regionals after she

cleared 10-6 and is ready to try and bring home her first state medal.

“It was really exciting to qualify because I have been having a really rough time lately,” Holtzen said. “I did really well and then I was really bad for two weeks in a row. That was hard mentally for me. This meet, I was just trying to focus on not even jumping well, but just having a good mindset to tell myself that I have done this before. It really meant a lot to me for it to come together at a perfect time for me at regionals.”

Fellow junior Frankie Hurst will join Holtzen in the pole vault ranks. Hurst finished fourth in the boys competition after he cleared 11-6, despite being gone most of the week due to a family matter.

“I am proud of Frankie and that he was able to qualify,” Griffin said. “He had some family things to deal with and he dealt really well with them.”

Although the Lady Cats were only able to qualify in three events, girls coach Greg Darrington liked what he saw out of each of them.

“I was very pleased with the 4×100 team,” he said. “I thought they did a great job with adding Gaza to the team. I was a little concerned but these girls really stepped up and did really well at league and regional meets. I will not count them out, as they just keep on competing as they have done all year.

“I think Urban has done a good job getting herself in position to qualify for the state meet and really think if she can keep her technique and control her nerves, she could use the energy of the crowd at the state meet to place and earn herself a medal. She has done a great job all year.

“It was also nice to see Isabelle come out of her struggles

and begin to compete again. I am anxious to see how she does Saturday. I think if she can clear 11-6, she has a good chance at a medal as well.”



Louisburg junior Isabelle Holtzen clears a height in the pole vault. She finished second at 10-6 and will be making her third trip to state.

The Kansas State Track and Field Championships will be held at Cessna Stadium on the Wichita State University campus. The Class 4A portion of the meet will begin at 2 p.m. this Friday and continue into Saturday.

Other regional results are:

GIRLS

100 dash: Jordon Leach, ninth, 13.73

200 dash: Leach, 11th, 28.60

800 run: Payton Shaffer, 11th, 2:41

4×400 relay: sixth, 4:30

4×800 relay: fifth, 10:57

High jump: Eileen Benne, eighth, 4-8

Pole vault: Avery Graham, fifth, 9-0

Long jump: Chloe Renner, ninth, 14-9.5

Triple jump: Renner, fifth, 32-10.5

Shot put: Ellie Katzer, ninth, 32-1.25

Discus: Lexie Reece, seventh, 97-9; Katzer, eighth, 92-10

BOYS

100 dash: Jackson Ewalt, 13th, 11.91

800 run: Tanner Belcher, 10th, 2:15

1,600 run: Wyatt Reece, fifth, 4:51; Jacob Benne, 11th, 5:13

300 hurdles: Ben Hupp, seventh, 42.50

Pole vault: Trent Martin, seventh, 11-0

Long jump: Charlie Koontz, ninth, 19-0.50

Shot put: T.J. Dover, fifth, 45-9.75

Discus: Kiefer Tucker, 13th, 104-2

Javelin: Austin Moore, eighth, 128-7; Matt Holloway, 10th, 122-8

Urban, Williams win titles at Frontier League meet



Louisburg junior Kaitlyn Urban lands in the sand pit during an attempt in the triple jump last Thursday at the Frontier League track meet in Eudora. Urban set a new personal record of 33 feet, 7 inches to win the competition.

EUDORA – In what was their final tune-up before regionals, the Louisburg High School track and field teams came away with a pair of champions during the Frontier League meet last Thursday.

Junior Kaitlyn Urban and sophomore Chris Williams each won a league title in their respective events to lead the Wildcat track teams at Eudora High School.

Urban set a new personal record for the third consecutive week in the triple jump. She won the event with a mark of 33 feet, 7 inches and picked up the first place in the event for the

second time in three weeks.

“I feel that Kaitlyn is really starting to peak at the right time and she will need to perform at her best this week to have a chance for the state meet,” Louisburg girls coach Greg Darrington said.

Williams put together a rare performance for the Wildcats as competed in both the 400-meter dash and 800-meter run. The events are only 30 minutes apart, but Williams finished in the top three of both races.

Williams captured the league title in the 400 dash with a time of 51.59 seconds and then turned around and finished third in the 800 run in 2 minutes and 5.46 seconds.

“I thought Chris was outstanding,” Louisburg boys coach Gary Griffin said. “We are going to run him in the same two races at regionals and see what happens.”



Louisburg sophomore Chris Williams sprints to the finish line in the 400-meter dash Thursday in Eudora.

The Wildcats didn’t fare as well in the league standings.

The Louisburg girls finished fifth with 48 points and Paola won the league team title with 204 points. Baldwin was second with 146.

On the boys side, the Wildcats took seventh with 54 points. Paola won the boys crown with 140 points and Spring Hill came in second with 93.

Junior Wyatt Reece put together a season-best performance for the Wildcats in the 1,600-meter run, while the 4×800-meter relay did the same.

Reece ran personal-best time of 4:37 to finish second in the

1,600, but had to pull out of the 3,200-meter run due to a foot injury.

The 4×800 team of Tanner Belcher, Ben Hupp, Jacob Benne and Williams also ran to a runner-up finish and a new personal best time of 8:32. Both the 4×100 and 4×400 relay teams took fifth overall.



Blue Caplinger (left) takes a handoff from teammate Jackson Ewalt on Thursday during the 4×100-meter relay.

Hupp and Belcher also scored points in individual events. Hupp finished fourth in the 300-meter hurdles in 43.48 seconds and Belcher was sixth in the 800 run in 2:11.

In the field events, senior T.J. Dover finished third in the discus to lead all the Wildcat throwers. Dover recorded a toss

of 138-7 as he was just a foot behind second place.

Junior Frankie Hurst cleared 11-8 in the pole vault to finish sixth and freshman Trent Martin got over the bar at 11-2 to come in seventh. Junior Kris Light was seventh in the high jump after he cleared 5-6.



Senior Ellie Katzer launches an attempt in the discus Thursday during the Frontier League meet in Eudora. She took seventh with a season-best throw of 99-10.

On the girls side, senior Chloe Renner scored points in two events for the Lady Cats. Renner finished second to Urban in the triple jump with a mark of 32-10 and later took fifth in the long jump at 15-0. Freshman teammate Sydni Keagle was seventh in the long jump at 14-9.75.

In the pole vault, junior Isabelle Holtzen cleared 8-4 to take fifth overall, while Eileen Benne and Haley Cain tied for sixth in the high jump at 4-7. Senior Ellie Katzer also scored points in the discus as she finished seventh with a season-best throw of 99-10.

On the track, the 4×100-meter relay of Kaitlyn Gaza, Urban, Cain and Jordon Leach came in third with a time of 53.71 seconds. The 4×800 and 4×400 relays came in fourth and fifth, respectively.

Keagle led the Lady Cats in the hurdles as she took fourth in the 100-meter hurdles in a time 17.26 seconds and Cain came in fifth in the 300 hurdles with a time of 54.01.

Louisburg returns to the track Friday for what could be the final time for many of the athletes. The Wildcats will compete in the Class 4A regional meet in Paola and the top four finishes in each event earns a spot in the state tournament.

Field events will begin at 11 a.m. and running events will follow at 1 p.m.

In other results:

GIRLS

100 dash: Jordon Leach, 10th, 13.77

200 dash: Leach, 10th, 28.30

400 dash: Mikayla Quinn, 14th, 1:08; Isabelle Holtzen, 16th, 1:09

800 run: Payton Shaffer, eighth, 2:40; Reilly Alexander, 13th, 2:51

100 hurdles: Haley Cain, eighth, 19.44

300 hurdles: Sydni Keagle, eighth, 57.78

High jump: Chloe Renner, ninth, 4-7

Long jump: Kaitlyn Urban, 12th, 13-3

Triple jump: Eileen Benne, 12th, 28-0.50

Shot put: Ellie Katzer, eighth, 33-1.25; Lexie Reece, 12th, 31-1.75

Discus: Reece, ninth, 98-9

BOYS

100 dash: Quinn Rigney, 10th, 11.72; Jackson Ewalt, 15th, 12.10; Charlie Koontz, 16th, 12.23

200 dash: Rigney, ninth, 23.55; Ewalt, 14th, 24.44; Austin Moore, 16th, 25.76

400 dash: Blue Caplinger, ninth, 54.19

800 run: Jarod Rose, 11th, 2:15

1,600 run: Jacob Benne, 13th, 5:16; Owen Staver, 16th, 5:30

3,200 run: Benne, 12th, 11:41; Staver, 14th, 12:29

Pole vault: Caplinger, ninth, 10-8

Long jump: Koontz, 15th, 16-10.5; Ridley, 16th, 16-7

Triple jump: Ridley, 10th, 32-7; Kris Light, 12th, 32-6.5

Shot put: T.J. Dover, eighth, 43-3; Matt Holloway, 18th, 36-8.5

Discus: Kiefer Tucker, eighth, 119-8; Holloway, 17th, 96-10

Javelin: Holloway, 12th, 121-6; Moore, 15th, 118-8; Tucker, 17th, 98-4