Cunningham shines at national rodeos



Louisburg High School freshman Lakin Cunningham, and her goat-tying horse Easy, fared well at a pair of national rodeos this summer and earned marks that were some of the best in the world on the junior high level.

Lakin Cunningham lives and breathes rodeo.

It is her passion and one that she works day and night improving her skills. Life in the rodeo world isn't an easy one as it features long trips, countless hours of practice and several weekends of competition a year.

All that hard work has paid off for Cunningham as she competed in two nationals rodeos in the last month and is now considered one of the best in the world in the realm of goat-tying.

The Louisburg High School freshman recorded a top 3 finish in goat tying in the National Junior High Rodeo Finals in Tennessee in June and later finished in the top 20 at the National Little Britches Rodeo Finals in Oklahoma earlier this month.

Cunningham was among 2,000 competitors at the National Junior High Rodeo Association Finals (NJHRA) that included participants from 42 states, five Canadian provinces and

Australia and she more than held her own.

In the goat tying competition, Cunningham had the fastest time in the finals as she won the jackpot with a 7.1 second run. In the first go-round, she won with a 7.7 second run. She later finished fifth in the short round and placed third overall in the world.

For her efforts, Cunningham won two belt buckles, a horse blanket, a shirt, a framed picture and money. The NJHRA is a division of the National High School Rodeo Association, which is the biggest youth rodeo association in the world.

Cunningham has qualified for the national rodeo the last three years and has been a Kansas Reserve Champion for two of those seasons.

“I was hoping to be either the world champion in goat tying or the Reserve World Champion,” Cunningham said. “I won the first go-round of the rodeo and the jackpot, so I was set up for a world or reserve championship. Due to a slower run in the second go-round I ended up third at that finals by less than two-tenths of a second. I drew a goat that was a runner in that round and it kept me from my ultimate goal. I also made the junior high national finals in the Barrel Racing, but due to injuries with my horse I did not do well.”



Lakin Cunningham finished third in goat-tying at the National Junior High Rodeo Finals in Tennessee.

She continued her success a couple weeks later when Cunningham traveled to the National Little Britches Rodeo Finals (NLBFR) in Guthrie, Okla., which is the oldest youth rodeo in the world.

Cunningham was one of 3,000 competitors from 33 states and Canada that range from age five to 18. To qualify, she had to place in the top 7 in four rodeos through the year and qualified for the third year in a row in multiple events.

This season, she earned a spot in goat tying, barrel racing and ribbon roping. In goat tying, Cunningham placed ninth in the world and also placed in the top 20 in ribbon roping.

“I did okay but I was again going for a world title,” Cunningham said. “I placed fifth in the Goat Tying and Ribbon

Roping in the first go-round. In the second go-round I did not place and had a no time due to a goat getting up to place in the round. I did make it back to the short go and placed third in the goat tying in the short round. Had my goat not gotten up in round two, I would have been a Reserve World Champion.

“The second go-rounds at both nationals cost me the titles. This is an event where the stock that you draw can affect the outcome and in my case it definitely did. I also ended up 20th in the world in the ribbon roping with my partner Chancy Johnson, from White City. I was also in Barrel Racing at this finals to, but struggled with horse issues here as well. My barrel horse spent part of national finals week at a vet in Oklahoma so I’m hoping she is on the mend and will be ready for next year.”

Cunningham and her goat-tying horse, Easy, found a lot of success in the last month. After her former horse, Trigger, had to be retired, Cunningham trained Easy, who was bred, born and raised on her grandparents farm in Louisburg.

Easy was a retired race horse, but Cunningham started training him for goat-tying and the two seemed to be a perfect match. She started hauling Easy to Kansas junior high rodeos in April.

“We didn’t know how he’d do or if he’d even work,” Cunningham said. “Suprisingly, he did work and took my goat tying to the next level, shaving half to a full second off my times. I was a late 7-second to early 8-second goat tier on Trigger. Once Easy found his groove, we started clocking early 7s in May and June. My fastest times of 7.1, 7.2, and 7.3 have been using this unexperienced horse I trained. I can’t wait to see what Easy and I accomplish in high school. My goal is now to start clocking 6-second runs in high school. With Easy, I know it’s possible.”

After qualifying for both national events the last three

years, Cunningham has seen a lot of good competitors over that span, and each year it gives her extra motivation to top her previous performance.

“The competition is definitely difficult, since it is on a national or international level,” she said. “I seem to push myself more when I compete with more and better competition. I used to compete on the regional level and when I advanced to the state and then national levels I began to push myself more and set more goals. I think that is because I know I have to do better when there is more competition.”

Cunningham will see a lot more competition in the coming years as she graduates from the junior high level to the high school division. Still, Cunningham is proud of what she accomplished during her last three years.

“I think they are all special to me in their own way,” she said. “In sixth grade it was special because I didn’t think I’d even make the NJHFR but I did qualifying as Reserve Champion Goat Tier in the state of Kansas. That year was my first year attending the NLBFR and I won the National Princess title that year and also placed in a go-round in barrels, which was very special as it made me set higher goals for the next year.

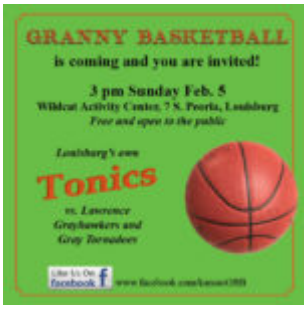
“In seventh grade it was special because my goal was to qualify for the NJHFR in barrel racing, too, which I did. At the NLBFR I set a goal to make the short go in one of my events and I ended up making it in all three. This year, my goal was to make it to the short go at the NJHFR and I more than did that with my third place finish. My NLBFR goal was to be in the Top 7 in the world in goats and barrels. I didn’t quite make either of those goals due to my barrel horse being hurt and that goat getting up.

“It just makes me want it even more next year. My goals are now to make it to the 2018 National High School Rodeo Finals

and to again go for Top 7 in the world in my events at the NLBFR. One day, I hope to achieve my world champion goal."

Lakin is the daughter of Kara Cunningham and granddaughter to Jim and Sandy Lowe in Louisburg.

Local granny basketball team to make Louisburg debut



"We're off our rockers." That's the slogan of Granny Basketball and it's coming to Miami County.

Granny Basketball is for women over 50 and follows girls' rules from the 1920s. That means the court is divided into three sections, a player has to stay in her designated section and oh, by the way, she can't run or jump. Hurry up is allowed and so is the granny shot, which is worth three points.

The first Miami County Granny Basketball game will match up the Louisburg Tonics vs the Kansas Grayhawkers and the Kansas Gray Tornadoes on Sunday afternoon. The two-game shootout begins at 3 p.m. at the Wildcat Activity Center (former West Gym), 7 S. Peoria St., Louisburg. The event is free and open to the public.

Local organizers Jean Carder and Becky Berg encourage the community to come check out the fun.

“Granny basketball is a hoot for the players and the fans,” Carder said. “And it’s a lot harder than it looks. My son teases me that I don’t have a vertical jump but I’ve been called for jumping. I’ve also been whistled for a flesh foul. Come to the gym Sunday and see what that’s all about,” she said.

The local team has 11 players and there is always room for more. “We’d like to invite any ‘granny’ over 50 who is looking for a little physical activity and a lot of fun to come check us out,” Carder said. “I’d like to get some gals from the other Miami County towns to join the fun and form a team.”

Granny Basketball started in Iowa in 2005 as a one-time fund-raising activity. The ladies had so much fun they decided to start a Granny Basketball league. There are 27 teams across the nation divided into three divisions. The two Lawrence teams will be traveling to Louisburg for the games Sunday. There is also a new team just forming in Olathe. The Tonics are part of the Granny Basketball southern division which has 10 teams located in Kansas, Missouri, Texas, Louisiana and Virginia. The eastern and western divisions feature teams mostly from Iowa but also Wisconsin and Minnesota.

Members of the Miami County Granny Basketball team are Jean Carder, Becky Berg, Janet York, Ellen Morland, LaVonne Mize, Susan McKeever, Mary Cromer, Mary Schmale, Jan Berg, Lisa Berg, Carolyn Williams and Kathy Musgrave.

For more information on Granny Basketball, check out the website at www.grannybasketball.com or the Kansas teams’ Facebook page, www.facebook.com/kansasgbb or call Carder at 913-837-5719.

Louisburg cheerleaders shine at FCCJC contest



The Louisburg fifth- and sixth-grade cheerleaders finished first in cheer and second in dance at the FCCJC cheer and dance competition on Nov. 20 in Olathe. Members of the team are (front row, from left) Sophie Katzer, Brinley White, Ali Marie Dubinick, Jenna Cauthon; (second row) Darci Stone, Bronwynn Williams, Dannah Knipp, Audrey Anderson, Sophie Goode, Ava Halbert; (third row) Ava Bilyeu, Julia Arriola, Isabel Bond, Maddie O'Keefe, Anna Poe, Ashley Bell; (back row) Izzy Moreland, Brooklyn Harmon, Rylee Hickey, Ashleigh Moore, Riley Haas, Maggie Madison, Taylor Curry and Jolie Hendrickson. Not pictured are Maddy Carpenter-Ross and Bria McMahon.

Whether it was in the youngest division or the oldest, the Louisburg cheerleading teams made a statement during the Football and Cheerleading Club of Johnson County (FCCJC) cheer and dance competition.

All three Louisburg squads earned top marks during the Nov. 20 competition at Olathe North High School.

The fifth- and sixth-grade team, which is coached by Jackie Bond, Nicole Bruner and Becki Madison, performed well as it finished in the top two in both the dance and cheer categories.

The group of Sophie Katzer, Brinley White, Ali Marie Dubinick, Jenna Cauthon, Darci Stone, Bronwynn Williams, Dannah Knipp, Audrey Anderson, Sophie Goode, Ava Halbert, Ava Bilyeu, Julia Arriola, Isabel Bond, Maddie O'Keefe, Anna Poe, Ashley Bell, Izzy Moreland, Brooklyn Harmon, Rylee Hickey, Ashleigh Moore, Riley Haas, Maggie Madison, Taylor Curry, Jolie Hendrickson, Maddy Carpenter-Ross and Bria McMahon came in first in the cheer contest and went on to take second in dance.

"We are so proud of these girls," coach Bond said. "They started practicing this past July. In August they tried out for advanced stunting certification and passed. This allowed them to cradle and log-roll. This was a big accomplishment especially for a squad this large with so many new members.

"As we entered the hallway right before we competed, they were so nervous. Much more nervous than I have ever seen them. But once they took the mat the magic started. They came out as the largest squad performing that day and really nailed their performances. So many told me after they performed that they had this one. We could not be more proud of what they accomplished this year and for their determination to not only win but to work hard to achieve their dreams. We asked a lot of them this last month and they not only rose to the challenge but made us extra proud in the process."



The Louisburg kindergarten through second grade cheerleading team finished first in cheer and second place in dance during the FCCJC Cheer and Dance Competition on Nov. 20 in Olathe. Members of the team are (front row, from left) are Evalyn Cannon, Afton Stuteville, Brianna Curry, Bella Pickman; (back row) Leah Burk, Emersynn Deere, Allison Bell, Kimmie Powls, McKinley Harmon and Reese Anderson.

Louisburg's kindergarten, first- and second-grade group of Evalyn Cannon, Afton Stuteville, Brianna Curry, Bella Pickman, Leah Burk, Emersynn Deere, Allison Bell, Kimmie Powls, McKinley Harmon and Reese Anderson also finished first in the cheer competition and went on to take runner-up in dance.

The team, which was coached by Mindy Bell and Becky Harmon, put together a strong performance at the best possible time.

"The girls worked very hard this year on their routines and it paid off," coach Bell said. "Coach Becky and myself are very proud of how much they learned this season."



Members of the Louisburg third- and fourth-grade cheerleading team are (front row, from left) coach Gracie Waite and coach Kim Burk; (middle row) Jessica Felder, Maddie Hughes, Kylie Knight, Kaylee Crooks; (back row) Jocelyn Burk, Shyloh Waite and Keelie Spillman. The team finished in third place in both the cheer and dance competition on Nov. 20

Success also followed the third- and fourth-grade team as the Wildcat group of Keelie Spillman, Shyloh Waite, Kaylee Crooks, Jocelyn Burk, Maddie Hughes, Kylie Knight and Jessica Felder brought home third place trophies in both cheer and dance.

Coaches Gracie Waite and Kim Burk led the group of girls all season and both were happy to see the girls' hard work pay off.

"We had an incredible squad of girls," coach Waite said. "Every time they came to practice they worked hard and didn't quit. I could not be more proud of them and everything we

accomplished as a team this season.”

For those interested in joining the cheer squads for next season, sign-ups will begin in February. For more information, contact Jackie Bond at louisburgcheer@outlook.com.

Forum on possible recreation commission to be held Sunday



In just five days, Louisburg residents will have an opportunity to pass a proposal that would allow the formation of a recreation commission in Louisburg.

The proposal on the ballot, will read, “Should the Louisburg Unified School District #416 and the City of Louisburg create a joint Recreation System, and levy one mill through the school district taxing authority, to provide for recreational needs of all ages, allow for a separate means by which to oversee recreational activities, and fund a number of current and future recreational functions within the Louisburg Unified School District 416 and the city of Louisburg.”

It seems clear enough, but certain voters want to know more specifics and how it will work. They will have the chance to ask all the questions they want Sunday as organizers are holding a forum discussing the possible recreation commission at 6 p.m. at Timbercreek Bar and Grill.

Louisburg resident Cindy Apple, one of the citizens who have spearheaded the proposal, will be on hand to answer questions and provide voters with all the information they need come Election Day.

“I hope to explain to the voters exactly how the rec commission will be organized, the need for it in the community and the possibilities that can come from it,” Apple said.

If approved, the money from the one mill increase would be used to hire a recreation director to help boost current programs and add new ones, along with maintaining and improving Louisburg’s current facilities.

The director would then work with a recreation commission board that is comprised of an equal number of city council and school board members and one at-large member.

Although it will take a small tax increase for this program to work, Apple believes this would be the start of bigger and better things for Louisburg.

“The biggest point I hope to get across is the idea that our one mill can grow into so much,” Apple said. “We don’t have to increase it. I’ve heard a lot of ‘It’s one mill now, but then what?’ Well, first it will take the board to raise it and I doubt the members of the city and school board who will serve on the rec commission board are just going to raise the mills hap hazardly.

“Secondly, we need the entity more than the money. The money will help but what I mean is when we have the recognized entity, we can get more. There are so many intergenerational and health initiative grants that will not give grant money to volunteer organizations (like LARA and the Louisburg Soccer Club). So yes, one mill may not set us up to do everything, but it will give us the foundation we need to build and grow.”

For more information on what the recreation commission

proposal is about, make sure to visit http://louisburgrec.simplesite.com/

Week 5 Athlete of the Week: Herman Knipp



Here is your Louisburg High School Athlete of the Week for week five. The award is sponsored by Prairie Shield Roofing.

HERMAN KNIPP, SENIOR, SOCCER

LHS senior Herman Knipp had his best game of the season last Thursday as he tallied three goals against Paola to help his team to a 5-0 win and he also recorded his first hat trick. Knipp has eight goals and two assists on the year. Congrats on the great week Herman!

The athlete of the week winner will be announced every Wednesday morning throughout the fall season. The winner is selected by Louisburg Sports Zone with the help of nominations from coaches.

Prairie Shield Roofing
"We Cover the Heartland"
913-837-8222
Insurance Specialists · New Construction
GOOD LUCK WILDCATS!

Wildcats shutout Eudora for fourth straight win



Louisburg senior Korbin Hankinson has his eyes on the endzone as he tries out outrun a Eudora defender Friday at Wildcat Stadium. Hankinson scored a pair of touchdowns in the Wildcats' 33-0 win over Eudora.

There was a lot to be excited about following Louisburg's 33-0 victory over Eudora on Friday at Wildcat Stadium.

The defense recorded its second shutout of the season and the Wildcats improved their record to 4-0 on the year. Despite all

that, the second half curbed Louisburg's enthusiasm on what appeared was going to be a perfect night.

"We will take the shutout, but we really didn't play very well in the second half," Louisburg co-head coach Jeff Lohse said. "We had a couple turnovers and a lot of penalties – and penalties killed us all game. They are just mental mistakes, so we will learn from those and get them fixed."

Louisburg fumbled twice in the second half and penalties stalled several drives after the Wildcats scored 25 unanswered points in the first half. Even the players realized it wasn't the way they wanted to finish the game.



Junior Dalton Ribordy pushes a Eudora runner back Friday in Louisburg.

"It feels pretty good to win," senior lineman Mason Koechner said. "We came out good in the first half, but man we had a lot of mistakes in the second half. The score shows that we did well, and our defense held up, but we could have done a lot better."

The Wildcats looked sharp early as they opened the game with a long drive that eventually led to a touchdown. Louisburg used a 13-play, 68-yard drive to go up 7-0 after a 1-yard touchdown run from senior Korbin Hankinson.

Eudora was then forced to punt on its next drive, but the Cardinal punter mishandled the snap and Louisburg senior Ben Hupp was able to recover the fumble and give the Wildcats a short field. Louisburg was able to take advantage as sophomore Austin Moore scored on a 2-yard touchdown run to go up 13-0.

Right before the end of the first quarter, the Cardinals turned the ball over on downs and Wildcat senior Jake Hill gave Louisburg good field position to start the second quarter following a 36-yard run. The next play, quarterback Grant Harding found fellow senior Thomas San Agustin who hauled in a 40-yard over-the-shoulder catch for a touchdown and 19-0 lead.

Moore recovered Eudora's second fumble of the game later in the first half and San Agustin later ran it in for a 3-yard touchdown to put the Wildcats up 25-0 at halftime.

San Agustin accounted for 113 total yards and a pair of touchdowns, while Hankinson had a team-high 81 yards on the ground and two scores, including a 30-yard pass from Harding in the fourth quarter to seal the win.

Harding had 159 yards of total offense to go along with his two touchdown throws as he guided the Wildcat attack. He also got good protection from his offensive line of Koechner, T.J. Dover, Dalton Frazier, Garrett Lowry and Dustyn Rizzo.

"I thought our offensive line and running backs did a nice job in the first half and Korbin made a nice catch in the second half," Lohse said. "Grant threw a couple nice balls for touchdowns, which was good to see because when teams start stacking the box against us we have to be able to throw the ball a little bit and he did a good job of that."

The Wildcats had trouble getting anything going on offense in the second half thanks to penalties and two turnovers.

Louisburg's defense did keep the shutout intact as it limited Eudora to 173 yards of total offense and the Cardinals never

threatened to score.

Senior Lyndon Smith led Louisburg with 10 tackles, while Moore and Koechner added nine and eight, respectively. Hill also finished with seven stops in the win.

“Yeah we got out to a big lead, but we feel like this team is good enough that we need to learn how to finish now and we are not finishing ball games,” Lohse said. “That is what we are going to work on this week and moving forward.”

Louisburg will go for its fifth straight win Friday when it hosts Baldwin for homecoming. Kickoff is set for 7 p.m.

“We are all pretty excited with what we have done so far,” Koechner said. “We are excited with what is to come and we know we are doing well, but we know we can do even better.”

LOU	**13**	**12**	**0**	**8 — 33**
EUD	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0 — 0**

First quarter

L: Korbin Hankinson 1 run (Nick Hull kick)

L: Austin Moore 2 run (kick failed)

Second quarter

L: Thomas San Agustin 40 pass from Grant Harding (run failed)

L: San Agustin 3 run (run failed)

Fourth quarter

L: Hankinson 30 pass from Harding (San Agustin run)

STATISTICS

OFFENSE

RUSHING – Korbin Hankinson 12-81; Thomas San Agustin 10-67; Jake Hill 7-64; Grant Harding 12-61; Will Ridley 1-11; Austin Moore 4-8

PASSING – Grant Harding 6-10-98

RECEIVING – Thomas San Agustin 2-46; Korbin Hankinson 1-30; Christian Tosterud 2-13; Ben Hupp 1-9

DEFENSE

TACKLES – Lyndon Smith 10, Austin Moore 9, Mason Koechner 8, Jake Hill 7, Nick Hull 5, Dustyn Rizzo 5, Garrett Lowry 5, T.J. Dover 4, Dalton Ribordy 4, Connor Green 3, Grant Harding 3, Thomas San Agustin 3, Blue Caplinger 3, Will Ridley 2, Kiefer Tucker 2, Christian Tosterud 1, Tucker Batten 1.

Organizers excited about improved Blazin' the Burg event



For the last five years, runners from all over the area have made their way to Louisburg every fall to compete in the

annual Blazin’ the Burg 5K Run and Walk.

Now that the event is in its sixth year, members of the Louisburg Chamber of Commerce want to make it a bigger experience – for not only the runners – but for the community as well when it kicks off on Oct. 1.

“We will have bands, food trucks, vendors and a lot of things for kids and families to do throughout the evening,” chamber director Becky Bowes said. “We are hoping a lot of people will come out and see what it is all about. We are trying to make this more of a community event encouraging everyone to come cheer participants on and enjoy entertainment before and after the race.”

Some of the entertainment will include the local band 68 Overpass which will play after the race until around 10 p.m. The children’s band Happy Face will perform before the start of the race to entertain the little ones.

Along with the vendors and food trucks, there will be face painting, a bounce house and cheerleaders from the Kansas City Chiefs will be on hand as well.

A new aspect to the event this year is race organizers decided to expand the race and add a 10K course to go along with the traditional 5K and kids fun run.

“We wanted to attract new runners and make it a little more challenging for some,” Bowes said. “We thought about doing a half-marathon but we couldn’t get a course together without crossing 68 Highway and we didn’t want to do that. But we hope the 10K will bring more people out and we are excited about it.”

The chamber is also trying to attract younger participants as well. There will be a kindergarten through fifth-grade challenge and the grade level with most representation will earn an extra recess at school and a popsicle.

The Blazin' Bash on Broadway will begin at 4 p.m. and the center of the entertainment will be between the Wildcat Activity Center and 1st and Broadway. The Kids Fun Run will start at 5 p.m., while the 5K and 10K Run/Walk portion of the event will take place at 6 p.m.

Louisburg High School cheerleaders and the drumline from the LHS Marching Band will be stationed throughout the course to help encourage the runners.

To register for the 6th Annual Blazin' the Burg, visit www.louisburgkansas.com. Registration for the 5K is $35 for an individual or $30 for a member of a team of four or more. For the 10K, the cost is $45 for an individual or $35 for a team of four or more.

The cost for the Kids Fun Run is $15, but organizers are also offering a discount for all races through Sept. 15. To receive $5 off your registration, enter the code '416' when signing up online.

Also at the festivities will be the group Giving the Basics. Members will accept donations of personal care items and those will be given to Louisburg High School students who are in need.

For more information about Blazin' the Burg, contact Bowes at the Louisburg chamber office at 837-2826 or at chamber@louisburgkansas.com.

Photo gallery: 2016 Fall

Sports Pep Rally

The 2016 fall sports season officially kicked off tonight when Louisburg High School held its 20th annual pep rally that was sponsored by First National Bank. All the different teams and organizations were introduced to the crowd and also had performances from the LHS Marching Band, Jazzy Cats and LHS Cheerleaders. Make sure to check out the photo gallery below for highlights from this evening's event.


















BAND
CAR
WASH
BAND
CAR WASH






LHS
FFA


WILDCATS
12
WILDCATS
24
WILDCATS
70






























Opinion: Time for Louisburg to vote ‘Yes’ on rec commission



In the midst of one of the most talked about national elections in recent history, the residents of Unified School District #416 will have a decision to make of their own.

When they hit the voting booth in November, those residents will see a question on the ballot that might not seem as crucial as who is going to be the next President of the United States, but it is important to the growth of the Louisburg community.

It will read something like this.

Should the Louisburg Unified School District #416 and the City of Louisburg create a joint recreation system, and levy one mill through the School District taxing authority, to provide for recreational needs of all ages, allow for a separate means by which to oversee recreational activities, and fund a number of current of future recreational functions within the Louisburg Unified School District #416 and the City of Louisburg?

The correct vote on this should be a resounding YES! At least it will be from me anyway.

The rest of you will have the opportunity to vote whether or not there should be a joint School District and City Recreation System. In other words, the two entities will come together to run a recreation commission and provide programs for area citizens to help improve a better quality of life.

A similar measure was tried almost 15 years ago, but was voted down.

Louisburg citizens Diana Moore and Cindy Apple approached Louisburg city manager Nathan Law about trying to get something put together on the November ballot.

Law informed the two that the best option to get something passed would be to go to the city council and USD #416 board of education to see if the entities would be interested in a joint venture and both groups voted unanimously to team up and see if the voters would be interested in having a recreation commission.

When Law took over as city manager in 2015, he looked at Louisburg's 5×5 plan that was adopted the city council in 2013, and one of the items on that list was an updated parks and recreation system.

"That is why it was on my radar to begin with," Law said. "When Diana and Cindy came to me and asked what I thought about a recreation commission, I already had some rough thoughts put together as far as what a school district rec commission would look like versus a city. It is something the community could find value in, but it is whether or not the school district would see the same value that city council does or vice versa. Both clearly saw the value in it to save Cindy and Diana the time of having to go door to door and get a petition put together."

So, the No. 1 question I am sure everyone is going to ask themselves first is how much is it going to cost.

Well to form a rec commission, there will be a one mill increase to property values within borders of USD #416. So, yes that means your taxes will go up.

For example, on a $150,000 home, your property tax will go up $17.25 a year – yes that is a right – A YEAR! On a $200,000 home it would be $23 a year, on a $250,000 home it is $28.75 a year and so forth.

So if you were taxed $23 a year, that works out to $1.91 a month or close to 6 cents a day.

The question you have to ask yourself is this: Is less than $2 a month worth having better recreation programs for not just area youth, but infants and senior citizens as well? Is less than $2 a month worth having a better quality of life.

For me, this is a no-brainer people. Yes, I understand some people have strict budgets and don't want to see their taxes go up at all. I totally get it as it seems a lot of us live

paycheck to paycheck. I am one of them.

At the same time, even if none of these so-called recreation programs affect you, you have to understand that this would be an investment in your community and should be one worth making.

You cannot look at this as just youth sports. This recreation commission issue is much more than that as it encompasses a majority of our population, whether it would be infant programs or programs that would benefit senior citizens.

This would take away our dependency on volunteers for our programs. Every organization in Louisburg is comprised of volunteers and rely on groups of people – most who already have full-time jobs and families of their own – to help run programs to give our children something to do.

There is also a chance the cost of current programs would decrease with a new rec commission.

Groups like the Louisburg Area Recreation Association (LARA) and Louisburg Soccer Club are made up entirely of volunteers and they never know if they are going to have enough to make it through a year.

“We struggle at times and we have had to send emails out parents asking for help for certain age groups or they won’t be able to have teams because we don’t have enough volunteers,” Moore said, who is also the president of the Louisburg Soccer Club. “I know LARA does too. A lot of the volunteers we have are the same people we are calling over and over again and it is tough.

“I want people to know it is not just youth sports. That is just one aspect of it. This would benefit senior citizens, all the way down to kids who haven’t started school yet. We have lots of ideas of what we can do. It will just be better for the community overall to have everything under one hat.”

That “one hat” will be comprised of a recreation commission board and a director. Two or three members of the city council, two or three members of the board of education and an at-large member will serve on the board, while the one mill increase will allow for the hiring of a director to oversee day-to-day operations when it comes to the scheduling of fields at Lewis-Young Park to promoting programs.

Apple, who is a member of the LARA board, believes this would be a win for everyone.

“A rec tax means so much more than sports,” Apple said. “Sports activities can absolutely be a part of the recreation program – but there are so many possibilities. I like to phrase it as more of a Parks and Programming Tax because this money will be specifically earmarked for improvements to our parks and sports fields and it will also offer programs that we do not yet have in Louisburg. This could include enhancements to our parks to make them more accessible to those of all ability levels, providing activities for children birth to age 5, and even providing adults more options. Many of the improvements to our baseball and softball fields are done by volunteers and LARA. The budget for the city for the parks and fields are line items and that takes away from our improvements to things like roads or other areas of business.

“On the programming side, we are looking at the hiring of a dedicated person who will oversee not just sports activities, but also programming from birth to seniors.

Apple has stated that if this ballot question is passed, that LARA will transition all of its money, equipment and resources over to the city to carry on the programs it started. However, not all recreation organizations will be forced to do it.

Programs like the Louisburg Soccer Club, the Louisburg Barracuda swim program, the Louisburg Kids Wrestling Club and Louisburg Senior Center will still be able to run separate

from the commission, but it gives them an option to keep the program alive if volunteers become scarce.

“As a volunteer for LARA, we are extremely excited for this opportunity,” Apple said. “It is a full time job to run LARA because it offers year-round athletic opportunities. We offer basketball, T-ball, baseball/softball, volleyball and flag football. When a season is not happening, we are prepping for the next season. The group of volunteers are incredible and we have worked hard to bring new opportunities to Louisburg since taking office. However, the reality is that the turnover for volunteers is inevitable and you hope that another strong group will take over – but that may not be the case. LARA has built a strong organization both in memberships and financially.

“Now, not every organization in Louisburg may want to do this. We have lots of groups, organizations, and businesses that offer athletic or enrichment opportunities and they may want to remain independent. The city is not looking to take over their programs, but will help by supporting and partnering up with them to give our community as many opportunities at home as possible.”

So, when you go to vote on Nov. 8, please consider voting “Yes.” This is something that has been long overdue.

I hear a lot of people say how great the Louisburg community and its surrounding area are – and they are spot on. So why not make a small investment and turn a great community into a greater one?

It is time.

Cunningham ready for the national rodeo stage



Lakin Cunningham, an eighth-grader at Louisburg Middle School, will be competing in two national rodeos in the next three weeks. She will travel to Tennessee this week for the National Junior High Rodeo Finals and will also compete at the National Little Britches Rodeo in Oklahoma in early July.

During these next three weeks, Lakin Cunningham will find herself among some of the best youth rodeoers in the nation.

It is a familiar place for her, actually.

Cunningham will leave tomorrow for Tennessee to compete in her second straight National Junior High School Rodeo Finals (NJHSFR). Then in the first week of July, she will depart for Oklahoma to take part in the National Little Britches Finals Rodeo.

The national spotlight isn’t anything new for the Louisburg Middle School eighth grader. Cunningham took part in the NJHSFR last year in the goat-tying competition and was the Kansas Reserve Champion in that event as a sixth-grader.

This year, Cunningham qualified for the national rodeo in barrel racing and goat tying and is ready for a better showing this time around. The NJHSFR features competitors from 43 states, five Canadian Provinces and Australia. Each of the

states or provinces bring their top four in each event.

“I am very excited to be competing at the NJHSFR again this year,” Cunningham said. “This is my second year making it and this year I even made it in two of my three events that I competed in at my state competition. The national rodeo is the toughest junior high competition in the world.”



Goat tying is one of two events Lakin Cunningham will compete in at the National Junior High Rodeo Finals.

At the state rodeo, Cunningham finished fourth in barrel racing and also took fourth in goat-tying to earn a spot in the national competition, but it led to some mixed reactions.

“I was very pleased with making it in the fourth spot this year in barrel racing,” she said. “It was one of my goals for the year. However, in goat tying I was a little bit disappointed because I led the state of Kansas all year long. I went into the state finals to win state and get a state championship title. Unfortunately, I didn’t have a great finals as I let my nerves affect my runs and ended up fourth. I am still very happy about making it in both of these events.”

“This year the Kansas circuit was tough. We have girls in our state that our definitely contenders in my events for a

national title and I hope that I am one of them.”

The national spotlight won’t be quite as bright for Cunningham this time around as she plans to use her experience from a year ago to propel her to a good finish.

“This year I am not that nervous because last year the national finals rodeo was my first nationals experience ever and nerves got to me and affected my runs,” she said. “This year I know I can’t get nervous or it will mess with me just like it did last year. I’ve been working on mental toughness along with my skills so I don’t get nervous.

“I want to go in there and make the short go, which is when the top 20 in each event advance to the final round of competition. That is my expectation going into national finals this year – do what I know how to do and know I can do it. Being in the top 20 would be awesome.”

Although she will be competing in those two events, Cunningham will also hit the campaign trail. She is currently running for the position of National President, and with that, she will be giving speeches and handing out campaign materials.

It is a lot of work for a middle school student, but she is looking forward to the challenge.

“It would be great to bring one of only three national officer positions back to our state,” she said.

If that experience wasn’t enough, Cunningham will also compete in the world’s oldest youth association in the world, which is the National Little Britches Rodeo Association (NLBRA).

Cunningham qualified for the National Little Britches Rodeo Finals (NLBRF) in four events – barrel racing, goat tying, pole bending and ribbon roping. Last year, she qualified in three events and placed fourth in the 1st go round in barrel racing.

She is also the current National Rodeo Princess for the NLBRA, which has allowed her to travel to eight states to represent the association.

“I’m very excited to compete in the NLBFR again this year,” Cunningham said. “My goals for this year’s NLBRA national finals is to get in the top seven in the world in goat tying and barrel racing. I would also like to place in go rounds and the short go in those two events as well.

“I am also very excited to compete with my Ribbon Roping partner Chancy Johnson from Whitewater. It’s a team event and she’s a great roper. I’m the runner. I hope we do good in that event as well.”