



**Lawrence Public Schools
Superintendent Message & Board Update**

Monday, April 14, 2025

Staff Honors

Congratulations to Tracy Murray, who has taught social studies at Lawrence High for 24 years. After her selection as Lawrence Secondary Teacher of the Year, KSDE recognized her as a Region 2 semifinalist during its Kansas Teacher of the Year awards luncheon in Topeka.

Lawrence Master Teacher Mandy Yoder, a Langston Hughes first grade teacher, was among school district nominees recognized during Kansas Master Teacher Day festivities at Emporia State University.

The Kansas Scholastic Press Association honored Free State journalism adviser Jared Shuff with its Sunflower Award, recognizing an outstanding new adviser who shows enthusiasm and dedication to building a strong journalism program.

The Lied Center will recognize Trish Neuteboom, Southwest Middle School speech and drama teacher, at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday during the Paul Taylor Dance Company performance. Neuteboom and the Dance Company are this year's Lied Center IMPACT Award recipients.

Student and Alumni Honors

LVS ninth grader Lawrence Dao earned first place in the Life and Behavioral Sciences category of the Great Plains Region of the U.S Junior Science and Humanities Symposium. He earned a \$2,000 scholarship and an all-expenses-paid trip to Virginia to compete in nationals later this month. That photo is of Lawrence and his brother, Daniel, winning the Douglas County Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge.

LHS senior Alexander Hennessy won first place at the e-Magine Media Fest with his animated film. His digital media teacher, Zach Saltz, says that this is one of the most prestigious digital media competitions for high school students in our region.

LHS junior Simn Robinson earned National Scholastic Art Gold and Silver Awards for his photography. Less than 1% of Scholastic Art Award winners earn Gold Awards. Senior Celeste Stinson and sophomore Ari Kamat earned national Silver Awards. Their teachers are Angelia Perkins, photography, and Todd Poteet, drawing and painting.

LHS senior Adelle Spiess qualified for the National Speech and Debate Tournament by placing second in Congressional Debate at the East Kansas District Tournament. Coach Jeff Plinsky says this is Adelle's second year qualifying for nationals. (Free State also has students qualified for nationals. We will share that list at the next board meeting.)

The Kansas Art Educators Association recognized LHS senior Celeste Stinson at the Kansas State Youth Art Month exhibition in Topeka. This painting of hers, called "The Reflections Attack," won first place in the high school division and received the Best of Show Award out of all entries in the state! Todd Poteet is her art teacher.

This team of Quail Run fifth graders won first place in the Kansas City Area Teachers of Mathematics Contest. Anna Heinritz, their gifted education teacher, supported these students entering the contest.

It's always gratifying to watch our alumni continue to accomplish great things. Three Free State alumni -- John Marshall, Ethan Harris, and Jacob Wilkus -- advanced to the elimination round of the collegiate National Debate Tournament last week as members of the KU Debate Team. Marshall and his debate partner, Graham Revare of Prairie Village, finished as national runners-up. They also received the Rex Copeland Award as the regular season's top team in the country!

Lawrence Schools Foundation News

Kansas Baseball's Michael Brooks has announced a third year of his "Hits For Teachers" campaign, pledging \$20 for every hit and \$40 for every home run he gets this season to the Lawrence Schools Foundation to support our educators. Brooks is a KU senior.

The Lawrence Noon Rotary Club again assisted the Foundation in delivering student snacks to all of our schools, thanks to a snack drive and an \$8,000 grant.

The Foundation honored Tracee Sowers, Cordley administrative assistant, and Jennifer DeWitt, Billy Mills Middle School paraeducator, with its spring A.C.E. Awards. Each of these educational support professionals received \$500.

We look forward to celebrating the Lawrence Schools Foundation's 40th Anniversary this week and want to thank all of the board members, staff, LEAP partners, and community donors who have played a part in the Foundation's history of generous support of our schools.

Upcoming School Events

The Lawrence High Career and Technical Education Department will host its annual Innovation Expo from 5-7 p.m. Wednesday. It spotlights projects by CTE students in a variety of fields, including visual art, video/animation, journalism, graphic design, plant and animal science, bio-med, health and human services, architecture, woodworking, robotics, and culinary. Stop by to see student demonstrations and enjoy student-made snacks.

Kennedy Early Childhood Center will host a Family Resource Fair from 10 a.m.- Noon Saturday with activities, resources, and food for families of young children.

The annual Lawrence Public Schools Student Art Show is April 25-May 11 at the Lawrence Arts Center. Our students and art teachers work year-round to make this show a success.

Community partner Lucia will exhibit photography and crafts created by students in the Community Transition program at Pinckney during Final Friday events April 25.

The Hillcrest Inter-Tribal Club, under the leadership of second grade teacher Shelby Tosee, will host its first Powwow April 26 in the Hillcrest gym. The public is invited and please be respectful of the neighborhood when finding parking.

Lawrence High's annual Showtime student talent show is 7:30 p.m. April 24-26.

Community Event

Cans for the Community has again challenged Lawrence and our schools to recycle 5,000 lbs. of cans in April. Proceeds from the sale of the aluminum will be donated to our elementary schools this year. Recycle your cans in one of the blue can houses found around town in parking lots of businesses and grocery stores.