



Submitted

Santa Fe Trail High School FBLA members, from left, front row, Molly Herren, Reese Black, Gretchen Huizenga, and Tanner Bolt; middle row, Tyler Bolt, Brynna Perry, and Ethan Ellis; back row, Gabe Smith and Leo Sheley, attended the FBLA National Leadership Conference June 29 through July 2, in Anaheim, Calif.

SFT students compete at FBLA conference

Students from Santa Fe Trail High School competed at the Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) National Leadership Conference (NLC) June 29 through July 2 in Anaheim, Calif. The NLC, which attracted more than 15,000 middle school and high school students, educators, and volunteers from across the country, provides education, competition, and networking opportunities centered on business.

Nearly 11,000 students from more than 2,000 middle schools and high schools across 48 U.S. states and territories competed in 100 business-related events for cash prizes totaling more than \$120,000. Students also had the opportunity to engage in over 120 learning workshops and meet with representatives from more than 260 colleges, universities, and employers, including Alzheimer's Association, BusinessU, CLA, Empowerly, FICO, Funds2Orgs, Jostens, Kendra Scott, Men's Wearhouse, UWorld, MBA Research, National Retail Federation, National Technical Honor Society, PNC Bank Student Lending, and TKS Worldwide, as well as the U.S. Air Force, U.S. Army,

and U.S. Coast Guard.

Additionally, students heard from keynote speaker and FBLA alumna, Karissa Bodnar, Founder and CEO of Thrive Causemetics and Bigger Than Beauty Skincare. In a live, onstage conversation with FBLA President & CEO Jennifer Woods, Bodnar shared her journey from high school entrepreneur to leading a globally-recognized beauty brand rooted in social impact. Her story inspired students to pursue their passions, embrace innovation, and lead with purpose.

SFT FBLA members Reese Black, Tanner Bolt, Tyler Bolt, Ethan Ellis, Molly Herren, Gretchen Huizenga, Brynna Perry, Leo Sheley, and Gabe Smith competed in Business Ethics, Client Service, Cyber Security, Local Chapter Annual Business Report, and Public Service Announcement.

While the students didn't break into finals, they had very high marks on their rating sheets and positive feedback in the judge's comments on their performances. "Very positive personality and quick response time to questions answered. I would hire this young lady if I had a company!" was the

remark from Herren's judge, regarding her competition in Client Service.

"This year's National Leadership Conference showcased the remarkable talent and dedication of our student members," Woods said. "From critical thinking and business management to finance, accounting, and information technology, they demonstrated the essential skills that will shape tomorrow's workforce. These middle school and high school students leave Anaheim with not only well-earned recognition, but also new connections, greater confidence, and a clearer path toward their future careers."

Future Business Leaders of America, Inc. is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) education association with more than 200,000 middle school, high school, and college members worldwide. FBLA inspires and prepares students to become community-minded business leaders in a global society through relevant career preparation and leadership experiences. The association is headquartered in Reston, Va., just outside of Washington, D.C. For more information, visit FBLA.org.

Back-to-school events announced

Burlingame USD 454 will host a back-to-school meet and greet from 5 to 6:30 p.m. Monday, Aug. 11.

Lyndon USD 421 will host its back-to-school night and cookout Tuesday, Aug. 12. Beginning at 5 p.m., incoming sixth-grade students, accompanied by a guardian, are invited to bring their school supplies, meet their teachers and learn their way around the school. From 6-7:30 p.m., all preschool through 12th-grade students are encouraged to bring their supplies, meet their teachers, and enjoy a hot-dog. Call the elementary/middle school office at (785) 828-4622, or email smitha@usd421.org with any questions.

Marais des Cygnes Valley USD 456 will host its back-to-school open house Wednesday, Aug. 13. The elementary school open house will be 5-6 p.m., and the junior high and high school open house will be 6-7 p.m. There will be opportunities for students

to meet their teachers, see their classrooms, and check their schedules. USD 456 will supply all students with general school supplies again this year, but elementary students will need P.E. shoes and a backpack, and junior high and high school students will need supply their own backpack.

Osage City USD 420 will host back-to-school night 5-7 p.m. Thursday, Aug. 14, in the school cafeteria. There will be free hot-dog meals, and students will have the opportunity to meet their teachers and put their school supplies in their classrooms or lockers.

Santa Fe Trail USD 434 will host its back-to-school open houses Tuesday, Aug. 19, and Wednesday, Aug. 20. Overbrook Attendance Center and Scranton Attendance Center's open houses will be 4-6 p.m. Aug. 19, and Carbondale Attendance Center's open house will take place 4-6 p.m. Aug. 20. For more information, call (800) 836-9525.

Algae warning issued for two area lakes

TOPEKA — The Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) and the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP) have issued an update regarding public health advisories due to blue-green algae.

Elevated from a blue-green algae watch to a blue-green algae warning as of Friday, July 25, were Melvern Outlet Swim Pond and King Lake in Lyon County.

The warning status indicates a harmful algal bloom (HAB) is expected or present, and conditions are unsafe for human and pet exposure. Contact with the water-body should be avoided. When a warning is issued, KDHE recommends the following precautions be taken:

- ❑ Signage should be posted at all public access locations, and contact with the water should be avoided.
- ❑ Inhalation of spray or aerosols may be harmful.
- ❑ Lake water is not safe to drink for pets or livestock, and lake water, regardless of blue-green algae status, should never be consumed by humans.
- ❑ Fish may be eaten if they are rinsed with clean water and only the fillet portion is consumed, while all other parts are discarded.
- ❑ Do not allow pets to eat dried algae.
- ❑ If lake water contacts skin, wash with

See **Algae** | 12

Commissioners advance tourism tax, website redesign

LYNDON — The Osage County Commissioners convened on July 22 to address key initiatives aimed at boosting tourism, enhancing digital infrastructure, and recognizing public safety efforts. Commissioners Heather Kuder and Brandon Smith attended in person, while Commissioner Les Holman participated via telephone. County Clerk Michelle Morris was present throughout, and County Counselor Joshua Ney joined the meeting after its start.

A significant focus was the approval of a transient guest tax to fund tourism promotion without burdening local residents. Economic Development Director Colleen Mendoza presented a detailed case for the tax, explaining it would apply to short-term lodging rentals of 28 days or less, paid by visitors and collected by hotel, motel, or short-term rental owners, such as those using platforms like Airbnb or Vrbo. The commissioners unanimously approved Resolution 2025-19 to implement a 2% tax starting in the fourth quarter of 2025, aligning with state statute KSA 12-1697. Mendoza highlighted that neighboring counties, including Franklin (6%, \$150,000 annually), Lyon (5%, \$38,000), and Coffey (increasing to 5%), already use similar taxes to support events like festivals and fireworks. To provide flexibility, commissioners also passed Charter Resolution C-2025-17, exempting the county from statutory limits and setting an 8% cap for future adjustments, potentially increasing to 5% or 6% by January 2026, after a 61-day protest period and public notifications in the local newspaper. Mendoza emphasized that 98% of the revenue would stay with the county, with 2% allocated to the state for administration, and funds would support website development, social media, advertising, and new events to attract visitors and boost local businesses.

Commissioners also explored upgrading the county's website through a Civic Plus presentation, which outlined an "ultimate" redesign package

See **Commission** | 12



Submitted

During the Osage County Commission meeting July 22, Don Hughes, KDOT law enforcement liaison, presented the Osage County Sheriff's Office with the 2024 Community Traffic Safety Award from the Kansas Department of Transportation. The sheriff's office achieved the platinum level award, which is the highest honor, for their participation in traffic safety educational programs and enforcement programs. The award was accepted by Sheriff Wells and Sergeant Knapp, who managed the participation in these programs. From left, Commissioner Brandon Smith, Undersheriff Brenner, Sergeant Knapp, Don Hughes, Sheriff Wells, Commissioner Heather Kuder, and County Clerk Michelle Morris.