



## NEWS RELEASE

For additional information, please contact David Jespersen by phone (402-471-4537) or email ([david.jespersen@nebraska.gov](mailto:david.jespersen@nebraska.gov))

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# NEBRASKA FCCLA MEMBERS CELEBRATE AN INCREDIBLE NATIONAL LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

Nebraska members proudly represented their schools, communities, and state association at the highly anticipated FCCLA National Leadership Conference (NLC) held at the Colorado Convention Center July 2-6, 2023, in Denver, Colorado. This annual event brought together nearly 8,000 passionate Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA) student members, advisers, and guests, including nearly 300 participants from Nebraska.

The conference provided FCCLA members with a wealth of incredible opportunities, including attending inspiring speaker sessions, engaging in youth workshops, competing at the national level, and networking with fellow youth leaders. Centered around the theme "incREDible," this conference highlighted how FCCLA offers incredible prospects to its members and advisers through Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) education. By exploring career opportunities and instilling real-world skills, advocacy, and service, FCCLA empowers its members to make an incREDible impact that will guide them throughout their lives.

Sandy Spavone, Executive Director of FCCLA, expressed her enthusiasm, stating, "We are thrilled to have welcomed over 7,900 members, advisers, corporate partners, and guests who are dedicated to discovering the unlimited possibilities available through FCCLA. The relationships and skills developed during this conference have inspired students to make an incREDible difference in their communities."

The conference officially began with the Opening General Session on Sunday, July 2. Emily Miller from Elkhorn North High School was selected to perform the National Anthem as part of the session. Nebraska FCCLA was also recognized as a state association with membership growth from the previous year.

Jaden Leasure, a senior at Nebraska City High School, and Leonardo Luna-Duran, a senior at Neligh-Oakdale Jr/Sr High School, represented Nebraska as two of 24 National Officer Candidates vying for a position on the 2023-2024 National Executive Council. Jaden will continue to serve Nebraska FCCLA as a Leadership Liaison in the upcoming year.

Leonardo Luna-Duran was elected to serve on the FCCLA National Executive Council as the 2023-2024 National Vice-President of Finance; in this position, he will also begin serving a two-year term on the National FCCLA Board of Directors. As a National Officer, Leonardo will join the rest of the National Executive Council at the FCCLA National Headquarters in Herndon, Virginia, in August for a planning meeting to prepare for the year.

Jonelle Thoene, a Family and Consumer Sciences teacher at Crofton Community Schools and 2022-23 Nebraska FCCLA Board of Directors Chair, received the 2023 Spirit of Advising Award. This is an honor bestowed on only one FCCLA Chapter Adviser from each state. This award is based upon the ability to recognize chapter advisers who are constantly faithful and

often quietly working behind the scenes to ensure the success of their students.

Brenda Budler, Family and Consumer Sciences teacher at Chadron Public Schools was recognized as an Adviser Mentor Award during the conference. FCCLA's Adviser Mentor program recognizes outstanding experienced FCS educators who excel within FCS profession and FCCLA. These skilled teachers train, assist, and familiarize new FCCLA Advisers as they adjust to their new role and responsibilities within FCCLA.

Three Nebraska FCCLA advisers were recognized as Master Advisers: Ashley Harrison, Chambers Public Schools; Tamara Nelson, Northwest Public Schools; and Jonelle Thoene, Crofton Community Schools.

Kennedy Brown, Northwest High School, ViviAnne Sayer, Schuyler Central, and Emma Sohler, Laurel-Concord-Coleridge, were selected to the jury round of the NLC Fashion Show, where they showcased their original designs to a panel of industry professionals. After the jury round, Kennedy Brown was one of twenty members selected to display her look on the runway during the annual Fashion Show, which took place during the Recognition Session on Wednesday, July 5.

Annually, Ford Driving Skills for Life and the Governors Highway Safety Association (GHSA) select 25 state-level FACTS (Families Acting for Community Traffic Safety) National Program project winners. For the third year in a row, Howells-Dodge was selected as the Nebraska award winner and was the recipient of a \$500 cash award. The chapter partnered with Teens in the Driver Seat to complete their "We're Buckling Up" project, which included a seatbelt check at their school and a FACTS Day to educate high school students about safe driving.

The National Say Yes to FCS Signing Event was held during the Closing General Session on Thursday, July 6. This event recognized 26 graduating high school seniors from across the country who have committed to a future career within one of the four FCCLA Career Pathways: Education & Training, Hospitality & Tourism, Human Services, and Visual Arts & Design. Marissa Bruce, a 2023 graduate of Bloomfield High School, participated in the signing event, along with mentor Lee Ann Runyon, as she committed to studying Family and Consumer Sciences Education at Wayne State College this fall. Kennedy Brown and Hailee Kozakiewicz, both 2023 graduates of Northwest High School in Grand Island, also participated in the signing event with their chapter adviser, Tamara Nelson. This fall, Kennedy will be studying Fashion Design at the Art Institute of Kansas City, and Hailee will study Interior Design at the University of Nebraska at Kearney.

At the heart of the conference were the highly anticipated Students Taking Action with Recognition (STAR) Events, where competitors were recognized for their proficiency and achievement in chapter and individual projects, leadership skills, and career preparation. The collaboration between youth and adults in managing the events and evaluating participants allowed students to develop real-world skills and gain valuable insights. With more than 30 events to choose from, participants have the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge, skills, and abilities by actively addressing important issues concerning families, careers, or communities. By researching the topic and implementing projects to advocate for positive change, students acquire valuable skills and industry insights needed to thrive in the 21st century.

Of the 4,300 competitors, Nebraska had 188 participants who came home with 70 Gold medals, 111 Silver medals, and 7 Bronze medals. There were 50 Top Ten award-winning events and those winners include:

### **First Place**

- Brooklyn Eckert, Boyd County – Career Investigation, Level 2, Gold
- Carli Hamilton, Battle Creek – Hospitality, Tourism, & Recreation, Level 2, Gold
- Ella Cramer & Ava Pruter, Cross County – Professional Presentation, Level 1, Gold
- Kara Brockman, Elwood – Promote and Publicize FCCLA, Level 1, Gold
- Izabel Hollatz & Baylee Settje, Leigh – Promote and Publicize FCCLA, Level 2, Gold

### **Second Place**

- Breanna Borchers, Battle Creek – Chapter in Review Portfolio, Level 3, Gold
- Addison Klabunde & Cadence Shrader, Minden – Chapter Service Project Display, Level 2, Gold
- Avery Herman & Brooklyn Mattison, Wayne – Chapter Service Project Portfolio, Level 3, Gold
- Cooper DeWitt & Derek Georges, Cross County – Digital Stories for Change,

Level 1, Silver

- Sadie Frazier, Milford – FCCLA Chapter Website, Level 1, Gold
- Natasha Zeisler, Boyd County – Promote and Publicize FCCLA, Level 3, Gold
- Elizabeth Stewart & Dylan Wall, Kearney – Sports Nutrition, Level 3, Gold

### **Third Place**

- Elizabeth Miller & Noelle See, Neligh-Oakdale – Chapter in Review Portfolio, Level 1, Silver
- Miranda Batenhorst, Logan View – Instructional Video Design, Level 3, Gold
- Emma Wubben, Hartington-Newcastle – Leadership, Level 3, Gold
- Josslyn Hoefer, Neligh-Oakdale – Sports Nutrition, Level 1, Gold

### **Fourth Place**

- Rose Woeppel, Chambers – Chapter in Review Portfolio, Level 1, Silver
- Tori Nelson & Kaydence Salmon, Battle Creek – Chapter in Review Portfolio, Level 2, Gold
- Hannah Scott, Chambers – Chapter in Review Portfolio, Level 3, Gold
- Katelyn Fletcher & Teegan Henderson, Boyd County – Chapter Service Project Portfolio, Level 3, Gold
- Kysa Loecker & Dalee Sazama, Bloomfield – Repurpose and Redesign, Level 1, Gold
- Lily Cramer & Olivia Phillips, Cross County – Sustainability Challenge, Level 1, Gold
- Shelby Steyer, Friend – Teach or Train, Level 3, Gold

### **Fifth Place**

- Winnie Huber, O'Neill – Chapter Service Project Display, Level 3, Gold
- Abigail Peden, Thedford – Entrepreneurship, Level 1, Gold
- Azia Giron, Avery Ladwig, & Lillie Shoemaker, Ord – FCCLA Chapter Website, Level 2, Silver
- Abby Ehlers & Cayenne Martin, Chambers – Food Innovations, Level 1, Gold
- Shayla Jacobsen, Plainview – Job Interview, Level 2, Gold
- Marisa Malander, Boone Central – Leadership, Level 3, Gold
- Tate Diediker & Alex Nelson, O'Neill – Sports Nutrition, Level 1, Gold

### **Sixth Place**

- Andy Nguyen & Alivia Olson, Kearney – Chapter in Review Display, Level 3, Gold
- ViviAnne Sayer, Schuyler Central – Fashion Construction, Level 3, Gold
- Marissa Hilbers & Jayde Kreifels, Logan View – Focus on Children, Level 1, Gold
- Holly Hostetler, Milford – Sustainability Challenge, Level 1, Silver

### **Seventh Place**

- Olivia Walter, Crofton – Instructional Video Design, Level 1, Silver
- Sidnee Hollum, Battle Creek – Teach or Train, Level 2, Gold

### **Eighth Place**

- Haylee Raygoza, Neligh-Oakdale – Chapter in Review Display, Level 1, Silver
- Carmin Gramke, Minden – Fashion Design, Level 2, Silver
- Paxton Burke, Ethan Houck, & Ayden Larson, Cross County – Instructional Video Design, Level 1, Silver
- Misty Noble, Cross County – Interpersonal Communications, Level 1, Silver
- Adrianna Mincer, West Holt – Leadership, Level 2, Gold
- Mazie Beister, Audra Groth, Briana Johnson, Cassidy Maricle, Melany Preister, & Natalie Schrad, Boone Central – Parliamentary Procedure, Level 3, Silver

## **Ninth Place**

- Aracely Negrete & Carmen Wagner, Ord – Chapter in Review Display, Level 2, Silver
- Savannah Hansen, Chambers – Chapter in Review Portfolio, Level 2, Gold
- Megan Boyd, Northwest – Leadership, Level 2, Gold
- Harrison Koehn, Elmwood-Murdock – Say Yes to FCS Education, Level 2, Silver

## **Tenth Place**

- Claire Reiman, Boyd County – Entrepreneurship, Level 2, Gold
- Kennedy Brown, Northwest – Fashion Design, Level 3, Gold
- Kassidy Biester, Miranda McGill, Myah Rankin, Madison Reilly, Mishayla Slaymaker, & Taryn Stephens, Boone Central – Parliamentary Procedure, Level 2, Silver
- Emma Baldeh, Leila Bernard, & Lexie Yrkoski, Dundy County Stratton – Promote and Publicize FCCLA, Level 2, Silver

## **About FCCLA**

Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA) is a dynamic and effective student-led nation-based organization supporting youth on their journey to become the leaders of tomorrow and helping them address important personal, family, work, and societal issues through Family and Consumer Sciences education. FCCLA has over 237,000 members and more than 5,100 chapters across the nation, with nearly 3,000 members in 100 chapters in Nebraska.

FCCLA: The Ultimate Leadership Experience is unique among youth organizations because its programs are planned and run by members. It is the only career and technical intracurricular student organization with a central focus on careers that support families. Participation in national FCCLA programs and chapter activities aids members in becoming strong leaders in their families, careers, and communities.

Nebraska FCCLA is supported through the Nebraska Center for Student Leadership and Extended Learning at the Nebraska Department of Education.



Jaden Leasure, rising senior from Nebraska City High School, delivers her speech to voting delegates as one of the top 20 National Officer Candidates.



Leonardo Luna-Duran (third from right), rising senior from Neligh-Oakdale Jr/Sr High School, was recently elected as the 2023-2024 National FCCLA Vice-President of Finance.



Kennedy Brown (left) and Hailee Kozakiewicz (right), 2023 graduates of Northwest High School, embrace their FCCLA chapter adviser, Tamara Nelson (center), during the Say Yes to FCS Signing Event at the 2023 FCCLA National Leadership Conference. On the far right, Marissa Bruce, 2023 Bloomfield graduate, embraces her mentor, Lee Ann Runyon, as part of the event.



Kennedy Brown, Northwest High School, showcases her original design as part of the FCCLA Fashion Show at the 2023 National Leadership Conference in Denver, CO.





Emily Miller, Elkhorn North High School, performs the National Anthem in front of nearly 8,000 attendees as part of the Opening General Session of the 2023 FCCLA National Leadership Conference.

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*David Jespersen*  
*Public Information Officer, Nebraska Department of Education*  
402-471-4537  
[david.jespersen@nebraska.gov](mailto:david.jespersen@nebraska.gov)  
[@NDE\\_News](https://twitter.com/NDE_News)