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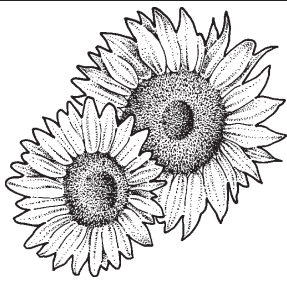
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Good job, FCCLA members, at national meeting!



Julica Bonsall, Brennen Clouse, Shelbi Hall and Michael Pettibone attended the Family, Career and Community Leaders of America National Leadership Meeting in Orlando, Fla. Bonsall was a voting delegate, Clouse was elected national president, Hall represented the Kansas State Executive Council as the state first vice president and Pettibone went as the District A president and a Students Taking Action with Recognition (STAR) evaluator.

Goodland senior elected national president

By Sharon Corcoran
slicorcoran@nwkansas.com

It takes several months of running for state office, followed by months of studying, nerve-wracking hours of speeches and interviews, late nights, early mornings and networking, but the newest national president of Family, Career and Community Leaders of America says it's worth it.

Brennen Clouse, a senior at Goodland High School, was elected national president at the organization's national leadership meeting July 13-17, but his run for president involved efforts throughout last year to run for state office and spending the whole summer studying.

But Clouse said all the work was worth it, and he's looking forward to his year as president even though it means more work and a demanding schedule.

"I feel lucky to be able to have the opportunity," he said, "and I'll take advantage of it."

Clouse is looking forward to traveling to Washington D.C., Texas and Florida as part of his presidential duties and working with the other nine national leaders.

It's a team of 10 students from all over the country who don't have a great knowledge of each other, he said, and they don't see each other a lot, but you become close because of your shared interest in the organization.

When you run for national office, he said, you start at the district level and are approved by your district. Then you run for a state office, and after you are elected, you can be approved by the whole state association at the state leadership meeting.

After that, he said, you can complete the national officer application, which includes listing your FCCLA experiences, information about your school, the classes you've taken and your high school transcript. You have to have a 3.5 grade average or better on a 4.0 scale, he said. You also need recommendations from your state advisor and school administrator, he added.

Clouse said once he had all of that done, he spent the whole summer studying FCCLA facts and reading publications. They

can ask you questions about anything, he said, and you don't know ahead of time what it will be.

And, he said, you have to know yourself, how you act with others and react to situations.

Clouse prepared a three-minute speech on the assigned subject: How can you electrify others around you about FCCLA? The subject went with the theme of the national meeting: "Excellence Electrified," he said, adding that he focused on leadership in his speech.

At the national meeting, Clouse went to the national candidate orientation, where he met all who were in the same position he was, candidates for national office. They had to network, he said, get to know others and help others get to know them without campaigning. If you campaign, he said, you can be kicked out.

The interviews started the next day, he said, for all candidates, whether at-large or regional. There are four regions in the United States, he said, and the regional candidates are voted on only by others in their region, whereas at-large candidates are voted on by members from across the country. Clouse was the only candidate from Kansas and ran at-large.

During the interviews, he said, candidates fielded questions on FCCLA facts and on their own behavior. For example, he said, they could ask, "If your parents didn't want you to be in FCCLA, how would you explain the benefits to them?"

The interviews were scary, Clouse said — they really make you think and make you conscious of who you are; everyone looks at you and judges you. You have to be confident in who you are, he said, but at the same time it humbles you — you're at the discretion of others.

"I went in thinking of everyone as my friends," he said. "That really helped."

The past national president from two years before chairs the nomination committee, so Michael Smith, a 2007 Goodland graduate, was chair.

"That was an element of comfort for me," Clouse said, "but he went as hard on me as

everyone else."

But Smith had helped him prepare ahead of time.

"Michael helped me a lot," Clouse said. "We're proud Kansas and Goodland could have two national presidents two years apart."

There were 21 at-large candidates to begin with, Clouse said, and they were narrowed down to 12. The next morning, he said, you pick up a letter, and it either says, "Congratulations, you have been chosen to move on to the next level" or "Sorry, you were not chosen."

Immediately after getting the letter, he said, you have to give your speech and answer one fact question and one behavior question before the voting delegates. They vote on their favorite candidates, he said, and narrow the 12 down to six.

Anyone can watch that process, he said, so there were about 2,000 members in the audience. The next morning, he said, you would pick up another letter, and it would either say "Congratulations" or "Sorry."

The six who go to the next level from the at-large candidates and the remaining four regional candidates (one from each region) form the new national executive council, he said, and they, with a facilitator, right away go into the process of picking offices.

The council decides who would be best in each office, he said, which is nice because you all have a say in who does what.

The council right away starts bonding and planning for the next year, he said — it's made up of 10 kids from across the country who don't know each other well, but they have the shared passion to try to achieve great things.

Immediately after that meeting, Clouse said, he gave his first presidential speech for the whole audience, which included about 5,500 members.

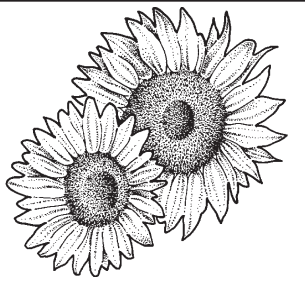
Clouse said as he travels a lot during the coming school year, he will rely on his friends to keep him up to date on things at home and will need help from FCCLA sponsors Gwen Cebula and Sarah Short to catch up on homework when he gets behind.



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