



Participants in Hartford High School's 2026 King and Queen of Courts ceremony were, from left, front row - senior Hannah Beard, kindergarten escort Emaleigh Goodwin, 2026 Queen of Courts Aubrey Finnerty, kindergarten escort Dexasyn Williams, senior candidate Maricela Munoz-Gardner; back row - 2025 Queen of Courts Keilee Finnerty, senior Daden Wilson, 2026 King of Courts Keenan Renfrow and 2025 King of Courts Nolin Trester.

Annabelle Payton/The Republican

## Renfrow, Finnerty crowned HHS King and Queen

HARTFORD — Seniors Keenan Renfrow and Aubrey Finnerty were crowned Hartford High School's 2026 King and Queen of Courts Friday, Feb. 6. This year's theme was "Golden Hour," and the ceremony was held after the conclusion of the boys' varsity basketball game against Tescott. In the King and Queen of Courts game, the Hartford High School Jaguars picked up a win, 66-35. The Lady Jaguars did not play a game due to not having enough players available to play.

Queen Aubrey Finnerty is the daughter of Heather and MJ Finnerty. She has been a member of the volleyball and basketball teams for four years, track team for one year and Southern Lyon County Softball team for one year. She has been a member of FBLA and ACT for four years and student council for two years, serving as president this year. She also attended the USD 252 Honor Flight in spring

2025. Aubrey currently works at Neosho Rapids Early Childhood Education Center. After graduation, she plans to attend Flint Hills Technical College to pursue her associate degree in business.

King Keenan Renfrow is the son of Amber Dunbar. He would also like to recognize Justin and Mindy Engle for being a support system for him this year. He has been a member of the basketball team for four years and football and track teams for three years. He has been a member of FBLA for three years and ACT for two years. Keenan currently attends Flint Hills Technical College and is studying power plant technology. After graduation, Keenan plans to attend McPherson College to complete his chemistry degree and play basketball.

Other senior candidates were Hannah Beard, Daden Wilson and Maricela Munoz-Gardner. Munoz-Gardner was escorted by junior Tyce Ndegwa.

Hannah Beard is the daughter of Kenda Beard and the late Kelly Beard. She has been a member of the cheerleading squad for four years. After high school, she plans to continue her education to pursue a career in special education.

Daden Wilson is the son of Annamarie and John Wilson. He has been a member of the football and basketball teams for four years. He has also been a member of Athletic Christian Team for four years, Future Business Leaders of America for three years and student council for one year. He also attended the USD 252 Honor Flight in fall 2023. Daden currently works at Neosho Rapids Early Childhood Education Center. After high school, Daden plans to attend Emporia State University to study elementary education.

Maricela Munoz-Gardner is the daughter of Maryanna Evans and stepdaughter of Charles McNeese. She has been

a member of the cheerleading squad and track team for four years and the basketball team for two years. She has been a member of National Honors Society for three years, student council for three years, serving as vice-president this year. After high school, Cela plans to attend Emporia State University to finish her art education degree, along with an elementary education degree.

Helping with the ceremony were the 2025 King and Queen of Courts, Nolin Trester and Keilee Finnerty, along with kindergarten escorts Emaleigh Goodwin and Dexasyn Williams. Trester is attending Flint Hills Technical College, where he is studying welding, and working at John North Ford. Finnerty is attending Emporia State University and has served as a teacher apprentice at Neosho Rapids Elementary. Emaleigh and Dexasyn are both kindergartners at Neosho Rapids Elementary School.

## USD 252 BOE approves 2026-27 calendar, contract

HARTFORD — The Southern Lyon County USD 252 Board of Education approved the district's 2026-27 school calendar and an audit engagement letter during its regular meeting Wednesday, Jan. 14, at the district's central office in Hartford.

Board President Emily Darbyshire called the meeting to order at 6 p.m. All seven board members were present, including Darbyshire, Greg Markowitz, Brad Hoelting, Melissa Carson, Charles Steffes, Michael Dieker and Gene Windle. Superintendent Ryan Muhlig and Clerk Dendra Stutesman were also in attendance.

In new business, the board unanimously approved the 2026-27 district calendar as presented. The board also approved the FY26 district audit engagement letter with Agler & Gaeddart, Chartered.

Several community members addressed the board during public comment. Asa Phillips, Adam McGee, Callie Duncan and Kylie Eurich raised concerns related to the Olpe Elementary first-grade class. Wade Schmidt provided an update on Phase 2 of the Olpe Fitness Park project, including property line easements and the interlocal agreement. Amber Looper questioned consistency in district policy enforcement related to out-of-school suspensions, while Jarom Smith asked about the timing of the decision to halt additional painting projects within the district. No action was taken following public comment.

Kerigan Samer, OPAA! food nutrition director, presented a report highlighting new menu items, special events and meal service statistics across the district. Nick Bess, representing the Southern Lyon County Recreation Commission, updated the board on ongoing work including

bylaw revisions, recreation director contracts, subcommittee membership and parent surveys.

Building principals Julianna Schmid and Lewis Whitson provided reports for Olpe Elementary and Junior/Senior High School, Neosho Rapids Elementary School, and Hartford Junior/Senior High School.

The board entered executive session four times during the meeting to discuss confidential student matters under the Kansas Open Meetings Act. Each session was approved unanimously, with the board returning to open session between discussions. No action was reported following the executive sessions.

In personnel matters, the board approved several recommendations, including Jessica Elliott as Hartford High School play sponsor and sophomore class sponsor, and Meghan Williams as Hartford Junior High School science teacher for the 2026-27 school year. Board members also reviewed annual job descriptions for district administrative and instructional positions; no action was taken.

The board approved the consent agenda in a single unanimous vote. Items included approval of December 10 meeting minutes; invoices totaling \$896,024.32; payroll totaling \$290,440.90; financial and activity account reports; and the FY25 final district audit report. No resignations were reported.

In his superintendent's report, Muhlig thanked board members for their service and reviewed the district's strategic plan.

Board members congratulated and welcomed newly elected members, and Hoelting commended students earning honor roll recognition and volunteers involved in the Honor Flight Pancake Feed.

## Keegan, Baker cast in Our Town

STERLING — Coffey County students are among the cast members in Sterling College Theatre's upcoming production of Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*, scheduled for performances later this month at Culbertson Auditorium on the Sterling College campus.

Performances will be held Thursday and Friday, Feb. 26-27, at 7:30 p.m., with additional performances at 2 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 28.

Local representation in the 18-member cast includes Kurt Keegan of Burlington, who portrays Dr. Gibbs, and Harleigh Baker of Burlington, who appears as Joe Crowell. Both are part of the ensemble bringing Wilder's classic portrayal of small-town life to the stage.

First performed in 1938, *Our Town* remains one of the most frequently produced plays in American theatre. Set in the fictional town of Grover's Corners, New Hampshire, the play explores everyday life, love, loss and the passage of time through the story of Emily Webb and George Gibbs, whose relationship develops from childhood

friendship into adulthood. Wilder's minimalist staging and reflective storytelling encourage audiences to consider the importance of appreciating ordinary moments while living them.

Advance tickets are available at [www.sterling.edu/arts](http://www.sterling.edu/arts) and will also be sold at the door prior to each performance. Admission is \$10 for adults and \$5 for students.

## President's List honors at Barton

GREAT BEND — Barton Community College has announced the students named to its President's List for the fall 2025 semester, recognizing those who achieved a 4.0 grade point average while enrolled in at least 12 credit hours.

Local students earning the honor include Caden Hartpence, Jordan Hartpence and Richard Plue, all of Burlington.

In total, 285 students were named to the President's List for the semester. The recognition is awarded to students who maintain a perfect academic record on a 4.0 or "A" letter scale while carrying a full-time course load.

## Registration open for Kansas Masonic All-State Marching Band Camp

EMPORIA — Registration is now open for the 43rd Kansas Masonic All-State Marching Band and Color Guard Camp, scheduled June 23-27 at Emporia State University.

High school musicians from across Kansas are invited to apply for the five-day camp, which brings together students

## 160 Years

Continued from Page B7

### 160 years ago (1866)

► We learn that three parties in Anderson County were arrested and bound over to appear at the next term of the United States District Court, for counterfeiting postal currency. The counterfeit is quite clever in execution, and they succeeded in putting a large quantity in circulation before it was detected. The change consists in taking a five cent bill, adding a cypher to the figure 5, and making a few trifling erasures, producing a very fair 50 cent bill of the same. (5¢ in 1866 is equivalent to about \$1.02 today and 50¢ is equivalent to about \$10.19)

► Orson Kent is driving a brisk trade with hunting parties from the plains. We notice almost every day large loads of buffalo robes being unloaded at his store. Wolves and buffalo are very numerous on the plains, this winter, and large numbers are being slain for the Eastern trade.

from around the state for rehearsals, performances and collaboration with fellow musicians. Applications are due Friday, April 3, and must be submitted online.

The camp concludes with a halftime performance at the 53rd Kansas Shrine Bowl on Saturday, June 27, at Welch Stadium on the Emporia State University campus. Participants also perform during Shrine Bowl weekend activities, including pregame festivities, the Shrine Bowl Banquet and a downtown parade.

Since its beginning in 1984, the Kansas Masonic All-State High School

Marching Band has been part of the Kansas East-West Shrine Bowl, a high school football all-star event that raises funds and awareness for Shriners Hospitals for Children. The Shrine Bowl has raised more than \$2.5 million to support the Shriners Hospitals network, which provides specialized pediatric care to children regardless of a family's ability to pay.

Each year, approximately 180 to 225 students are selected for the band and color guard. For 2026, there will be no limit on the number of students who may attend the camp, and all applicants are encouraged to work with their lo-

cal Masonic lodge during the application process.

Students may seek sponsorships to cover the \$450 participation cost, which includes uniforms, lodging, meals, in-camp transportation and all camp activities. Individuals and organizations interested in sponsoring a student may view a live list of students seeking sponsorship on the Kansas Shrine Bowl website.

Student applications and sponsorship information are available at [www.kansasshrinebowl.com/band](http://www.kansasshrinebowl.com/band). For additional information, contact Danny Hendricks at (620) 757-0585 or [band@kansasshrinebowl.com](mailto:band@kansasshrinebowl.com).

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(620) 364-5325

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- Elsewhere in Kansas - 1 year, \$49
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