



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Kentucky students, coaches awarded at National Speech and Debate Tournament

Birmingham, AL

Kentucky's best high school speech and debate students won numerous awards at the National Speech and Debate Association's Grand Nationals, the largest academic contest in the world, in Birmingham June 18-23. Students competed in five days of competition after advancing from district tournaments held from Guam to Maine. The NSDA Nationals dates back to 1931, awards college scholarships to the national titlists, and boasts past winners Shelley Long (*Cheers*), Brent Spiner (*Star Trek: The Next Generation*), Josh Gad (*Frozen*), and national finalists Oprah Winfrey, Jane Pauley, plus numerous other celebrities, politicians, and leaders in business and education. Kentucky's contests were held in March at Centre College and the Danville campus of Bluegrass Community and Technical College.

Half of the Kentucky District's twenty-six entries to the contest advanced from preliminary to awards rounds, marking the District's best showing in many years (and a great accomplishment, as fewer than one fourth of each event's entries advance into awards rounds). National Semifinalists were Rowan County's Jasarae McKinney and Corey Newsome (Duo Interpretation), Gatton Academy's Callie Freeman (House of Representatives), and North Oldham's Jack White (Senate). In the National Quarterfinals (top 30) were Danville's Grace Sheene (Dramatic Interpretation) and Charlie Hall (Oratory), Bowling Green's Cole Vaughan (Informative Speaking), Rowan County's Jordan Whittaker (Program Oral Interpretation), and North Oldham's Spencer Schumacher (United States Extemporaneous Speaking). National Octofinalists (top 60) were Murray's Anna Cate Brown and Brynn Jones (Duo Interpretation), Bethlehem's Alexander Brown (Informative Speaking), and Dunbar's David Ma (International Extemporaneous Speaking). Additionally, Beechwood's Lauren Ratliff (Lincoln-Douglas Debate) and Manual's Benjamin Hanson and Brendon Bultman (Public Forum Debate) advanced past the preliminary rounds in debate before being eliminated in round 8. Supplemental and Consolation events are held for students eliminated before the final rounds, and North Oldham's Spencer Schumacher placed fourth in the nation in Impromptu Speaking.

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Three Kentucky coaches were honored at the contest for career achievements. Murray's Michael Robinson was awarded his Second Diamond award for outstanding student scores over at least ten years of coaching. Trinity's Amy Zuccaro and LaRue County's Jeff Mangum each were recognized with their First Diamonds for outstanding student scores over at least five years of coaching. Coaches were honored in a special ceremony held in conjunction with the national finals at the Birmingham-Jefferson Convention Complex.

The National Speech and Debate Association (formerly National Forensic League) is the largest interscholastic speech and debate organization serving middle school, high school, and collegiate students in the United States. The Association provides competitive speech and debate activities, high-quality resources, comprehensive training, scholarship opportunities, and advanced recognition to more than 130,000 students and coaches every year. For nearly 90 years, the National Speech & Debate Association has empowered more than 1.4 million members to become engaged citizens, skilled professionals, and honorable leaders in our society. Visit www.speechanddebate.org or www.kynsda.org for more information.

Contact Steve Meadows, Danville High School, Kentucky District Chair, for more information.

steve.meadows@danville.kyschools.us. 859-396-0646 cell