



Photo illustration by Evan Gnagy | COLLEGIAN MEDIA GROUP/ Photo courtesy of Cary Conover

The ones who remember

K-State faculty and administrators reflect on the 25th anniversary of 9/11.

DECLAN PHIPPS
managing editor

It's been 25 years since America stood still, watching in horror as a second explosion turned an accident into intention, as black smoke poured from seemingly indestructible buildings and as two of those buildings, 110-story pillars of trade, came crumbling down in seconds, leaving a gaping hole in one of the most iconic skylines on planet Earth and in the hearts of millions of Americans.

Though most college students weren't alive to witness Sept. 11, 2001, its memory lives on at K-State 25 years later through faculty and administrators — the ones who remember exactly where they were when that fateful day unfolded.

Richard Linton,
president of K-State

President Richard Linton, a faculty member at Purdue University in 2001, began his Sept. 11, like many other mornings: in a faculty meeting.

"One of the faculty members, just sitting across from me, was on his phone and he's like, 'Whoa,'" Linton said. "He said, 'Stop,' and he said, 'You guys need to know what's going on.' And I think he recognized it pretty quickly that he thought that this was not just a plane accident. ... And then he looked at everybody, and he said, 'We need to stop the meeting. America has changed today.'"

Linton said he traveled on 200 airplanes a year at the time. But when the United States grounded all flights after the attack, he had to drive to Arkansas for a program that Sunday, Sept. 17.

"You want to talk about the coolest drive you'll ever have in your

entire life," Linton said. "When you were driving on the road, and every single truck that you go by or every single truck that goes by you has an American flag, and they beep the horn. ... Everyone was trying to go through the horror of what they just experienced and had this alive new love for America."

"You start thinking about yourself, you start thinking about your family, you start thinking about what's meaningful. I know I was thinking if I was on that plane, and I had to make a call back to my family or my wife, would I feel good about my life until the time that I had to make that phone call?"

Richard Linton
president of K-State

For Linton, witnessing 9/11 gave him a new perspective on life.

"You start thinking about yourself, you start thinking about your family," Linton said. "You start thinking about what's meaningful. ... I know I was thinking if I was on that plane, and I had to make a call back to my family or my wife, would I feel good about my life until the time that I had to make that phone call?"

Travis Habhab,
retired colonel and executive director for military and veterans affairs

After graduating from K-State in 1998, Col. Travis Habhab joined the military to become an Army aviator. On the morning of Sept. 11, 2001, he was on leave at his parents' house in Fort Riley on his way to Fort Hood in Texas.

Habhab said he was watching TV that morning when stations began reporting that a plane had flown into the World Trade Cen-

ter. At first, he thought it may have been an accident, but minutes later, everything changed.

"I watched the second plane hit live," Habhab said, holding back tears. "At that moment, we knew it wasn't an accident. I mean, we knew we were at war. ... I get emotional here, just thinking about the

friends that I've lost in combat deployments since 9/11."

In the years following 2001, Habhab served in both Iraq and Afghanistan, where he formed strong bonds with those he served with. Easter Sunday of 2004 was the first time he lost friends in the line of duty.

"We had an Apache shot down in Baghdad by a man pad [man-portable air-defense system], and we lost both those pilots, Chuck and Shane. ... They've got some stuff named after them out at Fort Rocker, Ala. ... And so every time I go to Alabama, I'll go to the gym that's named after them ... and a few other things to pay my respects."

Andrew Smith,
director of Wildcat Electronic Media and the assistant director for the A.Q. Miller School of Media and Communication

In 2001, Andrew Smith lived in Green Bay, Wisc. and was the sports

director and main sports anchor at WLUK Channel 11, a local TV station. Each morning, he led a Bible study, and afterwards returned home to catch up on sleep after late nights at the station. However, on the morning of Sept. 11, 2001, Smith's wife woke him up with a simple message — "Hey, Andrew, I

think you're gonna want to see this."

"I got up ... and got there in time to see the second plane hit," Smith said. "I immediately called the station and said, 'What can I do?' And they said, 'Well, it looks like this is going to be a disaster [of] massive proportion. We're gonna be taking a lot of national programming. I wouldn't plan to do your sports segment tonight.' I rushed into the newsroom, and there in the newsroom, we just had three to five networks on at any given time. ... And so we were watching; we were just watching coverage. And as it unfolded, watched with horror."

Smith is originally from New Jersey and spent a lot of time in New York City when he was young. He said he could see the Twin Towers on his drive to church every morning, making their collapse personal and hard to comprehend.

"It was surreal," Smith said. "We are so used to Hollywood effects. And when you're watch-

ing breaking news happen, and you see something happen that seems like it only ever happens in Hollywood, it is a cognitive dissonance that it takes the mind a minute to catch up. ... It all just kind of cascades as the building cascades. ... Emotions became very volatile. ... I found myself suddenly wanting to cry."

Following 9/11, major professional sports in the United States shut down for one week. However, once they resumed, MLB's New York Yankees, representing a city united in tragedy, made it to the World Series that October. Smith, a Yankees fan, said he called his brother who lived in California at the time, and they bought tickets to game three of the Series set for Oct. 30, 2001.

But that game wasn't just any ordinary World Series game. It was the night the 43rd President of the United States, George W. Bush, threw out the ceremonial first pitch.

"President Bush gets up there, and at that point, nobody cared what your party was," Smith said. "He was the president, and he threw a strike and [there were] chants of 'USA, USA, USA,' everywhere."

Michael Krysko,
professor of history

Dr. Michael Krysko lived in Ridge, New York, a small town on eastern Long Island, with his wife and toddler in 2001. On Sept. 11, he was in his second week working as an instructor at Dowling College, while finishing his studies at Stony Brook University.

SEE ONES ON A3 »

4-H members to showcase projects at State Fair

ALEX LANTERMAN
staff writer

After months of hard work and preparation, Kansas 4-H members from across the state, including Riley County, are set to showcase their projects on one of Kansas’ biggest stages: the Kansas State Fair.

The fair, which begins Sept. 11 in Hutchinson, is the highest level of competition available through the Kansas 4-H program, with participants showcasing projects ranging from livestock to baking to photography.

Kansas 4-H, a youth development organization housed in K-State Research and Extension, serves more than 15,000 members across all 105 Kansas counties. Participants can create projects across a variety of subjects and have creative control over the production. To qualify for the State Fair, members generally must earn a purple ribbon at their county fair.

Sarah Maass, Kansas 4-H youth development program leader, said qualifying for the fair is a significant accomplishment.

“It is the pinnacle of the showcasing exhibition for a 4-H program,” Maass said. “It’s an honor to be selected to have your exhibit qualified for the State Fair.”

Among those exhibiting at the fair is 16-year-old Delaney McDonald of Manhattan. McDonald is a Manhattan High School student who will exhibit two pigs and an angel food cake. She said qualifying for the fair meant a lot to her.

“I was just really excited,” McDonald said. “I started making plans of what I was gonna do.”

Daniel Skucius, interim Riley County 4-H agent, said approximately 100 static exhibits from Riley County will be displayed in Hutchinson this year, not including livestock entries.

The projects on display often represent months of preparation.

While some participants spend days perfecting baked goods, others devote nearly a year to crafting their idea, refining skills or raising animals.

“A lot of these 4-Hers have been working on it for a long time,” Skucius said. “Some started way back in October of last year.”

Visitors to the fair will encounter a wide range of exhibits, with food and nutrition, photography and visual arts expected to be among the largest, according to Maass. She said one exhibit she is particularly excited for is a geology display featuring a prehistoric aquatic animal’s fossilized head that a Kansas 4-H member discovered.

Beyond the projects themselves, organizers say 4-H helps participants build skills that extend into college and future careers. The connection between 4-H and K-State is a key part of that mission. As part of the university’s land-grant system, Kansas 4-H provides research-based



Photo courtesy of Sarah Maass

educational opportunities and introduces youth to potential college and career paths through programs like Discovery Days, an annual event on K-State’s campus.

“4-H members are graduating

and going on to college and beyond with better communication skills, more confidence in themselves, knowing that they have the ability to take pride in what they do,” Skucius said.

Willie AI program engages with underclassmen

AMYLEE GIL
news editor

Freshman and sophomore students may have noticed periodic text messages from Willie AI, often asking them how they are managing

the school year and their student lifestyle. What students may not know is that the Willie AI program is more than spam or mass text messaging — it serves to provide 24-hour support to first- and second-year students in finding

the right resources for them.

Students can interact with the program to find on-campus resources as well as any other K-State information. Shana Bender, director of retention and persistence, said the program has two functions which ensure adequate assistance to students.

“The first is to support students and provide them with resources at the time that they need it,” Bender said. “At any point in time, a first- or second-year student can text Willie AI and ask questions and get an answer about resources, locations and information on campus. The second part of what Willie AI does is routine check-ins with students to find out if there are any areas that are particularly challenging for them in a moment.”

The second functionality bridges the AI program to those at K-State who are able to help students in need of support. Generally, Willie AI will ask students

questions regarding how they are feeling about their wellness, academics, finances and belonging throughout the year.

Bender said students can also receive assistance in finding and contacting resources available to them depending on how they respond to the program.

“When a student responds to Willie AI to say, ‘this part of my experience is kind of tough or challenging right now,’ on the back end, we can help get connected with that student and make sure that they know all of the available resources on campus that could help them decrease that stress, overcome that barrier and see other pathways to move through that challenge,” Bender said.

Luke Matulewicz, assistant director of the Academic Achievement Center, said the program is part of a campus-wide effort to improve student support in areas that need it.

“K-State hears student voices, and we respond to them,” Matulewicz said. “[Willie AI] is really converting student voices and student feelings into an actionable plan to improve as a campus.”

For Karla Lopez Correa, sophomore in music education, the program introduced K-State services she wasn’t aware of prior to using Willie AI.

“It offered me tips and services that I didn’t know were included in my tuition,” Lopez Correa said. “It felt like I was talking to another student ... it wasn’t like, ‘sorry, this AI bot can’t compute,’ it was actually giving me the correct information.”

Previously, the service was exclusively available to first-year students; however, this year it has been expanded to include second-year students as well. Though upperclassmen do not have access to the Willie AI program, the ‘I need help’ feature in K-State’s Navigate app performs a similar function and is available to all students.



Illustration by Grace Gibson | COLLEGIAN MEDIA GROUP

Bandidas Coffee Co. officially opens its doors in Manhattan

DELANEY WRIGHT
staff writer

Bandidas Coffee Company, located on Anderson Avenue, held its grand opening on Sept. 5 and 6, introducing a new coffee spot to Manhattan.

Jessica Nelson and Ashley Vicencio, co-owners of Bandidas Coffee Co., said they saw a high volume of customers at the new coffee shop after their soft opening in July.

“From the very beginning, we’ve had days with a steady line for hours and have sold through food and drinks faster than we could prepare them,” Vicencio said. “Seeing the community continue to show up for us has made the craziness completely worth it.”

The shop is western-themed, blended with elements of His-

panic culture and the owners’ personal style. They offer a variety of coffee and food influenced by familiar qualities that the owners grew up with, such as specialty flavored lattes and New York-style bagels. The signature drinks feature house-made delicacies such as a creamy horchata milk base, tres leches milk base, cold foams and spiced Mexican chocolate.

“We pull inspiration from our Hispanic culture throughout the brand and menu, but in a way that feels authentic to us rather than trying to fit into one specific box,” Vicencio said.

“Brewed by Outlaws, Loved by Locals” is more than their tagline — it describes the recently opened coffee shop’s personality and goals of creating a gathering space for the community.

Alli Gervais, junior in nursing

and a Bandidas Coffee Co. customer, said she enjoyed her experience and the shop’s aesthetics. Gervais said the coffee shop can be described as comforting, delicious and cute.

“The bagels are so good, and I like all the different spreads I can get with it,” Gervais said.

Nelson and Vicencio went from brainstorming ideas for their dream coffee shop to making their vision come to life with a successful grand opening this past weekend.

“There’s something really special about remembering those early conversations Jessica and I had over coffee, writing down ideas for a business that didn’t exist yet, then looking around now and seeing a full coffee shop with people sitting together, ordering drinks we created and enjoying a space we designed with our hands,” Vicencio said.



Photo by Erica Merz | COLLEGIAN MEDIA GROUP

Customers enjoy their coffee inside the newly opened Bandidas Coffee Co. The new store has a full retail display alongside its main service area.

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Yuma Street Cultural Festival celebrates Manhattan Black heritage

EMMA MCATEE
arts & culture editor

Located on the eastern side of Manhattan, historic Yuma Street hosted its second annual Yuma Street Cultural Festival on Sept. 6. Every year, the festival brings together families, businesses, artists, educators and community leaders for a day focused on culture, history and community pride.

The Black Entrepreneurs of the Flint Hills (BEFH) hosted the festival, which featured several distinct experiences throughout the day, including food trucks, shopping villages showcasing local businesses, impact villages and even activities for the kids who attended. The co-founder and executive director of BEFH, Sheila Ellis-Glasper, helped lead the Yuma Street Cultural Festival to be the event everyone strived for.

“The festival really grew out of our work to preserve the history of Yuma Street and bring the Yuma Street Cultural Center to life,” Ellis-Glasper said. “When we started digging deeper into the history, we realized how many incredible stories are connected to this small area of Manhattan. You have connections to the Negro Baseball Leagues, the Green Book era, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Jackie Robinson, Earl Woods and generations of Black families, entrepreneurs, churches and community leaders.”

Ellis-Glasper and her team wanted to do more than renovate the historic buildings around Yuma Street; they wanted to bring people to the street and allow them to experience the culture while also preserving history. This

year — the second year — the cultural experiences expanded with West African dancing and drumming, soul line dancing, the Divine Nine Stroll-Off, youth dance performances and more.

“We want to honor the Black history of Yuma Street while creating a space where the entire community can come together and experience it,” she said. “You could look around this year’s festival and see children, elders, longtime residents, newcomers and people from different backgrounds eating together, dancing together, learning together and supporting local businesses.”

“Celebrating Black history doesn’t mean closing anyone else out. We’re saying, this is an important part of our community’s story, and everybody is invited to come learn about it and celebrate it with us.”

Sheila Ellis-Glasper
executive director of BEFH

For K-State students, the festival offered a unique look into the importance of reviving the history nestled in the heart of Manhattan. Harper Latta, junior in advertising and public relations, said the event served as both a cultural experience and an opportunity for civic engagement.

“I came out to the Yuma Street Cultural Festival for Secretary of State candidate Jennifer Day,” Latta said. “Our campaign team had found this event, and I was excited to go along with her as I

had been to a similar event like this two years ago and really enjoyed seeing all the cultural vendors as well as the performances.”

While campaign work brought her to her first Yuma Street festival, the district’s historical significance left a lasting impact.

“This was my first time really learning about the Yuma Street District as I don’t have any personal roots,” Latta said. “It was incredible to have the option for the historical tour as well as talking to the people and audience as part of the event. I think the impact the Yuma Street Cultural Center will have on the community is that it

will give the people of Manhattan a place to connect but also to celebrate the history of our area.”

The connection she felt while attending the event directly aligned with the theme of this year’s festival: Reclaim and Rise, meaning to honor the historic Yuma Street and build up the next generation.

“To me, Reclaim and Rise means that you recognize where you come from and take pride in that history to then go and create a better future,” she said. “It’s

turning your past into strengthening your community.”

Part of community strength comes from investing directly into local creators who set up their shops during big events like these.

“Supporting anyone locally keeps money with the people,” Latta said. “Big franchises are supported by a vast number of outside help, but supporting those trying to make it on their own adds a much more personal touch.”

Festival attendees on both sides of the vendor tables felt that personal touch. For local business owners like AniQueia Shay, creator of A Abstracts LLC, the festival offered a platform for direct connection with the community.

“I have always enjoyed coloring and creating art growing up,” Shay said. “I started painting in 2015 as a form of fine motor support. I started my business to create a professional atmosphere where I could share my creations. I’ve always desired entrepreneurship, and starting my own business has guided me closer to that goal.”

Events like the Yuma Street Cultural Festival have allowed Shay to share her art with the public. Yuma Street has been a big part of Shay’s life, and she has seen it change over the past 22 years. Because the town is deeply rooted in her life, she has eagerly participated in the Cultural Festival for the past two years, sharing her story through art.

“My artwork is described as contemporary Afrocentric illustration and abstract figuration, with minimalist silhouette inspiration,” Shay said. “I use these elements to express feeling and soul, which have become part of my signature style. I suppose the story my art is



Artwork courtesy of AniQueia Shay

telling is fluently perceived, while each piece is different, of course. Ultimately, the story is strength and beauty in simplicity.”

By sharing her artwork in a place so close to home, she gets to continue to experience the importance of Yuma Street and watch the community expand.

“My favorite part about having a booth at the festival is experiencing the ‘why’ of the past and present work surrounding the Douglas Center and Yuma Street, and seeing just how vital and impactful it is for the community,” Shay said. “Though I am a bit bashful when talking about my art and meeting new people, it is enjoyable to see and experience the interactions that happen during the event.”

Beyond the celebration, the festival serves a greater purpose for Yuma Street. Proceeds from the festival support Shepard Chapel’s restoration and the new Yuma Street Cultural Center’s development. The center will permanently serve as a hub for arts and culture, youth development, digital equity and more.

Manhappiness welcomes Waylon Wyatt | K-State students enjoy a night out at The Hat

GRETA KLEIN
editor-in-chief

The scuffing of boots on hardwood floors and strumming of guitars resonated through The Hat as Manhattan’s country music fans congregated for a night of enjoyment.

Waylon Wyatt, a young and up-and-coming country music artist, performed for a sold-out crowd at The Hat Tuesday night. Manhattan residents ages 18+ walked through the door, looking to enjoy a night of pleasure, including K-State students.

Karson Peter, sophomore in agronomy, is a fan of Waylon Wyatt and said he decided to attend the concert after seeing advertisements via The Hat on social media.

“[I came out] because Waylon

Wyatt is the goat and I love live music,” Peter said. “It was so fun to be with my friends.”

Though The Hat is known to elevate artists beginning their music careers, it’s also a pivotal place for students to connect. Taylor Umscheid, junior majoring in integrative human sciences, said she thinks it’s cool to see smaller artists at local venues, and enjoyed being surrounded by familiar faces from campus.

“You’re also surrounded by a lot of your fellow classmates,” Umscheid said. “I met so many people from my major, and I’ve seen so many people from my clubs and everything tonight, so it’s been interesting and fun.”

Returning concertgoers said they find themselves circling back to The Hat for more entertainment.

“I’d love to come back to The Hat,” Dustin Denton, sophomore in animal science, said. “I’d suggest anybody coming.”

Mason Ramsey, known from a viral video of him yodeling “Love-sick Blues” by Hank Williams in a Walmart, opened for Wyatt, starting the night with the right vibes.

“[I was] just hooting and hollering, really dancing,” Peter said. “It was fun.”

No matter whether it was returning students or first-timers, Wildcats made memories and bonded at a country music hub for the Manhattan community.

“I thought that it would be super duper fun,” Umscheid said. “I’ve never been to The Hat before, so I wanted to see what it was like.”



Photo by Kasha Kemnitz | COLLEGIAN MEDIA GROUP

Country singer **Waylon Wyatt** performs at The Hat in Manhattan on Sept. 8. This was Wyatt’s first performance in Manhattan, drawing a sold-out crowd to the Aggieville venue.

ONES

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“I had a toddler ... a little over two years old, [and I] was taking her to daycare,” Krysko said. “My landlord comes out and says, ‘Did you hear the news?’ I said, ‘What news?’ ‘A plane has flown into the World Trade Center.’ And I remember my initial thought was [that it] must be an accident.”

Krysko would drop his daughter off at daycare and drive back home, only to receive a call once he returned.

“When I get back, I get a call from the daycare provider,” Krysko said. “And she was very upset and said, ‘We’re closing the daycare. We need to get all the kids home. We’re at war.’”

After picking up his daughter, Krysko drove to Dowling College expecting to teach his classes that day accompanied by his toddler. However, when he arrived at the college, Krysko found it closed and returned home to his wife to watch the

rest of the day unfold on TV.

But it wasn’t just his own memory that remains with him 25 years later — it was his father’s too. Krysko’s father worked for New York City at the time in the Department of Environmental Protection. The Twin Towers’ collapse damaged many of the water mains in the surrounding area, so he had to travel to lower Manhattan to get sufficient water pressure as close to ground zero as possible. Krysko said his father’s first visit to the World Trade Center site was one he’ll never forget.

“He said the thing that sticks with him is he just saw shoes everywhere,” Krysko said. “Lots of shoes, empty shoes ... they had cleared all the bodies away from the people who had leapt out of the tower.”

Rachel Dirks, associate professor of music and director of orchestral studies

Rachel Dirks was brand new to her jobs teaching orchestra at Lawrence High School and South Junior High — now Billy Mills Middle

School — in the fall of 2001. She began her Sept. 11 at Lawrence High, watching TV with her husband, the high school’s band director, as smoke poured from the North Tower of the World Trade Center.

Dirks soon left for her first orchestra class at South Junior High, which consisted of 70 eighth- and ninth-graders. She said parents began pulling their children from class as the morning unfolded, something she wrestled with doing herself.

“As a mother, all I wanted to do was get in my car and get my kid,” Dirks said, tears forming in her eyes. “But I knew I needed to stay and reassure the children that I had in my care.”

That reassurance came in the form of music.

“You could feel the anxiety as the students walked in the room,” Dirks said. “I’m constantly [thinking], ‘Hmm, what could we play next that’s calming?’ and trying to keep them at bay. ... I remember choosing first the piece that they loved the most, and just working on that to try to calm them.”

Dustin Meritt, assistant teaching professor for the College of Education

On Sept. 11, 2001, Dustin Meritt was a student at Highland Community College and a specialist in the Army Reserves. He said he watched the morning’s events unfold on a TV in his apartment.

“I think we must have had ESPN on at the apartment, and then they ... broke into the broadcast and talked about it [the attack],” Meritt said. “That day, it changed everything.”

After graduating from Highland Community College with an associate’s degree, Meritt enrolled at K-State. However, in late 2002, he was activated to the military and had to unenroll from his courses. Meritt was stationed in Iraq for one year, an experience he said dramatically impacted his perspective on life.

“You grow up,” Meritt said. “You go over [to Iraq], you’re like a college kid, and so then you ... grow up pretty quick. When I was overseas, I realized you could not come back. ... Something could happen, and you never go home. ... I never

thought of life like that.”

After the attacks, Meritt returned to his hometown of Vermillion, Kan., where he went on active duty for three years. Then, in 2007, he left the military and earned a bachelor’s degree in restoration management from McPherson College, before going to Sterling College to study education. After graduating from Sterling, Meritt taught special education for six years before returning to K-State in 2016 to teach and earn a PhD in education.

Meritt said without the events of Sept. 11, 2001, his life’s trajectory would have been very different.

“I wouldn’t have went active duty had I not deployed,” Meritt said. “I wouldn’t have done my stay in the reserves. ... I paid into the active duty GI Bill, so it allowed me to have more money to go to college. Not just pay for one degree, but then go into another. ... So it was just this ripple effect. You have this massive thing that happens, and then there’s these ripples, and then there’s micro-ripples of how it just changed the world, changed a lot of people in it.”

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Dancing with who? Has *DWTS* lost its star power?

The latest season of “Dancing With the Stars” has caused controversy by relying too heavily on reality TV stars.

AMELIA LIKENS
opinion editor

“Dancing With the Stars” unveiled its next celebrity cast on “Good Morning America” on Sept. 2. The ballroom dancing reality show, where professional dancers are paired with celebrities to compete for the Mirrorball Trophy, has returned for its 35th season with its largest cast yet.

Big names such as Julia Stiles and Tyler Cameron were put next to names you have to Google, such as Conner Leavitt and Sara Jane Nader, leading fans to wonder how a show named “Dancing With the Stars” can cast people who are not “stars.”

DWTS has had many big names compete in the past, including Kim Kardashian, Zendaya and Michael Phelps. That’s what makes the show so entertaining: watching celebrities step out of their usual talent and learn to ballroom dance. It’s reality TV gold.

There is a certain algorithm DWTS has followed when casting celebrities in past seasons. The show typically casts from categories like athletes, actors, Olympians, musicians and reality TV personalities, choosing people of different ages and levels of relevance to appeal to different age groups and widen its viewership.

Five out of the 16 stars this season — Tyler Cameron, Maura Higgins, Conner Leavitt, Ciara Miller and Sarah Jane Nader — are reality TV stars, making it the largest category of the season.

With nearly a third of the cast coming from reality TV, the variety starts to disappear. Could DWTS’s casting algorithm be changing?

That’s not to say there aren’t some exciting casting choices this season. Julia Stiles, an ac-

tress best known for “10 Things I Hate About You,” is partnered with Ezra Sosa. This duo is going to be one to watch, and hopefully they throw it back and dance to “Hypnotize” by The Notorious B.I.G.

Another pairing is “Glee” and “Grey’s Anatomy” actor Harry Shum Jr. with Jenna Johnson. These two will hopefully bring some of that “Glee” powerhouse energy we saw from Heather Morris and Amber Riley.

Comedian Connor Wood is paired with Rylee Arnold. This duo is a Gen Z dream and will definitely pull in younger viewers, with both having large social media followings.

One of the most famous stars of this season is actress Jenna Dewan, who has nearly 10 million followers on Instagram — more than anyone else in the cast. But her casting also flags another big controversy when it comes to DWTS: casting celebrities with dance experience.

Jenna Dewan started her career as a professional backup dancer, even performing with Janet Jackson, and is best known for her performance in “Step Up,” a movie centered around dancing.

Charli D’Amelio, a TikTok dancer, and JoJo Siwa, star of “Dance Moms,” both received backlash for the unfair advantage their previous dance experience gives them on the show.

Perhaps DWTS intentionally casts at least one celebrity with significant dance experience, not only to stir up drama, but to ensure there is at least one star who can deliver on the dance floor.

But the biggest problem with this season’s cast might not be the number of reality TV stars or the professional backup dancer attending dance lessons. It might just be who DWTS is deeming a “star.”

Conner Leavitt, husband



Graphic by Juli Tanksley | COLLEGIAN MEDIA GROUP

of former DWTS contestant Whitney Leavitt and a supporting cast member on “The Secret Lives of Mormon Wives,” alongside Sarah Jane Nader, sister to former contestant Brooks Nader and star of “Love Thy Nader,” have both been cast on DWTS.

The two are arguably the most unrecognizable names in the entire cast and are both related to former DWTS contestants. Their casting can’t help but feel promotional rather than star-studded when “The Secret Lives of Mormon Wives” and “Love Thy Nader” are all

available through Hulu, along with DWTS.

While the “Dancing With the Stars” cast announcement has been met with mixed reviews, there is no doubt this season will be full of viral moments, the occasional controversy and, hopefully, many samba rolls.

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K-State golfer **Nanami Nakashima** watches her putt at the Powercat Invitational on October 20, 2025. Nakashima finished three under par after the first day of the event. Archive photo by Payton Lee | COLLEGIAN MEDIA GROUP

K-State women’s golf finishes 11th at ANNIKA Intercollegiate

BRADY HOWARD
staff writer

A strong start to the final round turned into another difficult finish for the K-State women’s golf team Wednesday. The Wildcats shot a 12-over 300 for the second consecutive round at Royal Golf Club, finishing 11th at the ANNIKA Intercollegiate Presented by 3M with a 42-over 906. K-State finished one stroke behind Houston for 10th place and five strokes behind Missouri for ninth.

“It was obviously a disap-

pointing week,” head coach Stew Burke said. “There were some positives early in the round, but unfortunately, we did not do well on the final nine once again. We need to work on finishing off rounds.”

The Wildcats’ best individual performance came from junior Nanami Nakashima, who provided K-State with its first under-par round of the season. Nakashima shot a 4-under 68 Wednesday to move up 16 spots on the leaderboard and tied for 22nd at 2-over 218 overall.

After starting on the back nine, Nakashima bogeyed No.

12 but responded with three birdies over the next four holes. She birdied holes 15, 17 and 18 to make the turn at two under, and added two more birdies on the front nine at holes 4 and 6. After a bogey on hole 7, Nakashima closed her round with a birdie on the par-5 ninth.

“Nanami Nakashima had a great tournament in extremely difficult conditions,” Burke said.

Freshman Amy Wang finished 44th place at 11-over 227, shooting a 5-over 77 in the final round. Burke also pointed to Wang as one of the tournament’s positives.

“There were some bright sparks from our freshman, Amy Wang,” Burke said.

Senior Julia Ballester Barrio finished 51st at 15-over 231 after shooting a 3-over 75 in the final round. Sophomore Stalee Fields finished one stroke behind her in 52nd at 16-over 232 after shooting a 9-over 81.

Junior Kelsey Chen rounded out the Wildcats’ lineup, tying for 55th at 20-over 236 after shooting an 8-over 80 Wednesday.

Wake Forest won the team title by 10 strokes at 24-under 840, and USC finished second at 14-under 850.

UCLA’s Michelle Xing won the individual title at 9-under 207 after shooting a 7-under 65 in the final round, edging Wake Forest’s Chloe Kovelesky by one stroke.

For K-State, the focus now turns to fixing the issues that surfaced during its season opener.

“I expect a tweak to the lineup for the next event,” Burke said. “We have to use some time to refresh and get to work before our next event.”

The Wildcats return to competition Sept. 19-21 at the Schooner Fall Classic at Belmar Golf Club in Norman, Okla.

Wildcats sweep the Bulldogs to claim tournament crown

PAIGE MUELLER
sports editor

Following a straight-set victory over CSUN (28-26, 25-18, 25-23) on Sept. 4 to open the Wildcat Classic, K-State volleyball wrapped up its non-conference home slate in dominant fashion Sunday afternoon. The Wildcats swept the Drake Bulldogs in three sets (25-17, 25-13, 25-20) at Morgan Family Arena to claim the tournament crown.

With the victory, K-State extended its winning streak to four games and moved to 12-1 in set play this season.

Starting the first set strong, the Wildcats took it 25-17, breaking open an early 7-7 tie with a commanding 9-1 run powered by seven straight serves from Caleigh Ponn and three blocks from Cadence Lundgren. Up 20-15, K-State put the set away with a 5-1 finish, capitalizing on a net defense that forced 11 Bulldog errors and held Drake to a .000 hitting percentage in the opening frame.

Fired up by the packed purple crowd, the Wildcat offense exploded in the second set, taking an early 9-1 advantage. Big 12 ace leader Emerson Van Lennen fueled the fire with five kills and an ace. Later in the set, K-State smashed five straight kills to push the margin to 18-6, hitting an efficient .433 behind a balanced attack to claim set two, 25-13.

Set three was the closest battle of the night as Drake made its tightest push, cutting K-State’s lead to 12-11. The Wildcats responded immediately, keeping the Bulldogs at bay. Senior Reagan Fox was unstoppable in the closing frame, posting five kills without an error on a set-high .714 hitting efficiency to seal the 25-20 win and complete the match sweep.

“I thought that we started a little flat, but I thought we got bet-

ter kind of as the match went on,” head coach Jason Mansfield said. “Our offense got better. Felt more connected as the match went on. So really proud of our performance, and I thought our offense was really good.”

As a team, K-State hit a season-best .353 clip (44 kills, 8 errors, 102 attempts) compared to Drake’s .155. Wildcat standouts at the net included Fox, who had a career-high 12 kills and posted a career-best .556 hitting percentage. Van Lannen dished out 18 assists alongside seven digs, while libero Fuka Sekita and Addison Massey anchored the back row with 11 digs each.

“I think Jason and I have worked super closely on what we want this culture to be, especially having a bunch of young girls come in, and I think the biggest thing that stands out is just our competitiveness,” Fox said. “So, I think our fight is commendable.”

K-State dominated the net overall, out-blocking Drake 10-3 behind four blocks each from Lundgren and Reese Resmer.

“We’re starting to build a real identity here with our depth and flexibility,” Mansfield said. “Having options at every position means anyone can step up when called on, and that versatility is what’s going to carry us when we hit tough stretches on the road.”

Following the victory, Massey secured tournament MVP, while Fox, Sekita and Van Lannen each earned All-Tournament Team selections for their performances over the weekend.

The Wildcats hit the road for their first away test of the season at the Nevada Tournament in Reno, Nev. K-State opens tournament play against Weber State at 8 p.m. MT on Friday, Sept. 8, before closing out the weekend against host Nevada at 3 p.m. MT on Sunday, Sept. 13.



Photo by Kasha Kemnitz | COLLEGIAN MEDIA GROUP
(TOP) The Wildcats huddle up after they got a kill to win the first set in their match against Drake. K-State would go on to win 3-0.

Photo by Erica Merz | COLLEGIAN MEDIA GROUP
(BOTTOM) **Cadence Lundgren (16)** jumps to set up an attack over the net during the Wildcats’ match against Drake at Morgan Family Arena. Lundgren had four kills in the match.

KNOW YOUR OPPONENT

Wildcats, Wazzu ready for their first ever showdown in Week 2

PAIGE MUELLER
sports editor

K-State 1-0

The highly anticipated season opener for the Collin Klein-led Wildcats was dominant, as K-State delivered a 71-3 victory at Bill Snyder Family Stadium. Klein introduced a high-energy offensive approach that saw 85 total Wildcats hit the field, with a school-record nine different players scoring touchdowns. K-State piled on 559 total yards of offense, striking a lethal balance with 312 yards on the ground and 247 through the air. Senior quarterback Avery Johnson led the charge, completing 15-of-21 passes for 199 yards and three touchdowns, along with a 10-yard rushing score. Johnson's performance pushed his career total to 51 passing touchdowns, breaking

the program record. Sophomores provided explosive depth on the ground and out wide, with running back Rodney Fields Jr. rushing for 101 yards and a touchdown in his Wildcat debut, and wideouts Jaron Tibbs and Derrick Salley Jr. securing four catches apiece. On special teams, Brandon White provided an instant spark by taking a first-quarter punt return 65 yards to the house — marking K-State's first punt-return score in two years. Defensively, the Wildcats allowed just 122 total yards, their lowest in a single game since 2009, behind strong efforts from safety Logan Bartley and linebacker Gabe Powers, who each had five tackles.

Washington State 0-1

The Cougars make the journey to Manhattan seeking a crucial rebound after falling 24-10 to rival Washington in their Apple Cup season opener. Head coach Kirby Moore's squad enters Week 2 looking to clean up execution, particularly on third downs, where they failed to convert on all 11 attempts in their opener. Establishing early-down rhythm and staying out of third-and-long situations against K-State's aggressive front seven remains a high priority for the Cougars. Offensively, Washington State relies on the dual-threat capability of quarterback Caden Pinnick alongside senior wide receiver

Daniel Blood, who paced the Cougars with 57 receiving yards in his debut. "I think their [Washington State's] quarterback is dangerous and makes plays and is incredibly tough," Klein said during his Monday press conference. On defense, the Cougars boast a disruptive defensive line anchored by a talented pair of edge rushers, Linus Zunk and Matyus McLain, who will aim to penetrate the Wildcats' offensive line. For Washington State to force an upset in Manhattan, they must limit self-inflicted mistakes, protect Pinnick and slow down K-State's balanced run-pass tempo.



SATURDAY,
SEPT. 12
11 A.M.

WATCH ON
TNT

BY THE NUMBERS

KSU		WSU
71	PPG	10
247	Passing YDS/PG	142
331	Rushing YPC	100
0	Turnover Ratio	-2

Graphic by Lilly Crist, archive photo by Payton Lee | COLLEGIAN MEDIA GROUP

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Back in The Bill



Photo by Kaitlyn Cook | COLLEGIAN MEDIA GROUP
(TOP LEFT) K-State brought back the mascot tackle during the season opener against Nicholls for the first time since 2013. The tradition was stopped after a student playing the West Virginia mascot had a seizure after being tackled.



Photo by Payton Lee | COLLEGIAN MEDIA GROUP
(BOTTOM RIGHT) Quarterback **Avery Johnson (2)** breaks a tackle before bursting into the endzone for a touchdown against Nicholls. Johnson threw three touchdown passes to bring his career total to 51 and became the Wildcats' leader in career passing touchdowns.

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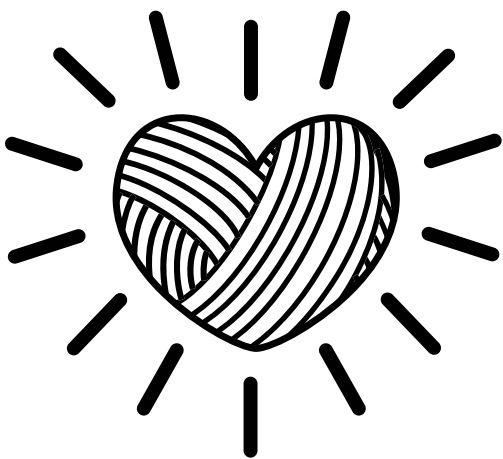


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