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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Braelyn Falls Honored with KSHSAA Heart of the Arts Award

TOPEKA, Kan. - Braelyn Falls, a student from Southern Coffey County High School, has been selected to receive the KSHSAA Heart of the Arts Award. This award seeks to recognize those individuals who exemplify the ideals of the positive heart of the arts that represent the core mission of education-based activities specifically in the music, speech, debate, theatre, visual arts and other performing arts activities.

KSHSAA Executive Director, Bill Faflick, invited all member high schools to submit the name of an individual, coach or team demonstrating such qualities.

Braelyn Falls was diagnosed with a rare eye disease called Stargardt's at age seven. This disease is the juvenile form of Macular Degeneration which has left her with only 20/400 peripheral vision. The senior relies on a magnifying system and braille to assist her in the classroom as well as everyday tasks.

Reestablishing the high school Drama Department was something that Braelyn advocated for her junior year. With success, she has held leading roles and served as a student director. Falls carried on her love for the arts by participating in forensics her sophomore, junior, and senior year. At State Forensics her junior year, she placed seventh in Improvised Duet Acting and was a State Champion in Humorous Duet Acting.



Dancing is something at which Braelyn enjoys and excels. In her nine years of dancing, she has taken tap, jazz, pom, musical theatre, and hip hop classes. Falls has been a member of Bri's Dance Studio Competition Team for the last six years. The dance team has received many awards and high placements at competitions.



Braelyn is very passionate about working as a mentor to provide inspiration and motivation to students who are blind and/or visually impaired. Envision Inc. in Wichita, Kansas runs a summer program called Level Up. She volunteers as a mentor to help other students learn how to use assistive technology. For the past three years she has participated in the annual Envision 100 meter race and was a guest music performer at the Envision Gala this past fall.

Falls is dedicated in helping raise funds and awareness for the Foundation Fighting Blindness. Each summer she forms a team for the Vision Walk in Kansas City, Missouri. Serving on the board as a youth chair and leading warm ups for the walk are a few other ways that she helps spread awareness.

Falls is currently ranked number one in her class with a GPA of 3.98 and was selected as a Kansas Honor Scholar. Each semester in high school Braelyn has achieved the Superintendent's Academic Award and has been selected each year by the high school staff as a Student of the Month at Southern Coffey County High School.

Braelyn has served as class President her junior and senior year and is also the President of the Student Council this year. She was the Student Council Vice-President her junior year. In addition to this, she has been involved in multiple extra-curricular activities, organizations, clubs, held leadership roles, and received awards/honors which include: Varsity Scholars' Bowl all four years; Varsity State Scholars' Bowl qualifier in 2017; Titan Leadership Group all four years; Titan Leadership Secretary in 2017-18; Titan Leadership President in 2018-19; Fellowship of Christian Athletes her junior and senior years; St. John Lutheran Church Youth Group all four years; received the Citizenship Award her junior year.



Another remarkable fact about Braelyn is that she has also been very involved in the athletic program at SCCHS. Falls has been involved in volleyball, basketball, and track all four years. This year she has served as a team captain in both volleyball and basketball. Braelyn qualified for the State Track Meet as part of the 4X100 Relay team in 2016, 2017, and 2018. She also ran on the State qualifying 4X400 Relay team in 2016 and 2018.

The KSHSAA Student Advisory Team participates in the selection of the state of Kansas honoree.

As the state honoree, Falls will receive a plaque to be displayed at the school. The presentation of the plaque will take place at a KSHSAA tournament or local event that is yet to be determined. The nomination has been submitted for consideration by the National Federation of State High School Associations.

The National Federation initiated the NFHS Heart of the Arts in 2014. The NFHS will announce a national honoree at its annual summer meeting in early July.