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## PRESS RELEASE

### Kansas Association of Conservation Districts holds 79<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention

**December 4, 2023:** Conservation leaders from across Kansas recently gathered for the 79<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention of the Kansas Association of Conservation Districts (KACD). The annual convention was held in Wichita and drew over 360 attendees for the three-day event according to Dan Meyerhoff, executive director for KACD. Since 1944, KACD has helped forge key partnerships among federal, state, and local entities all committed to a common goal: wise use and protection of our state's natural resources. These partnerships have been highly effective and mutually beneficial, allowing for shared space, equipment, and knowledge.

Each year, the KACD convention offers breakout sessions and keynote speakers aimed at providing members with timely education and information and this year was no different. The theme for the 2023 convention was *"Quality Water, Quality Life"* and the agenda was full of topics encompassing this message, reminding attendees how important the work they do in conservation is to the lives of all Kansans. According to KACD Board of Directors, President William Simshauser, thanks to the robust agenda and quality speakers *"people left the convention with a renewed enthusiasm to conserve and manage our natural resources and to work together to achieve those goals."*

National and State legislative updates were provided from Representative Ken Rahjes, chair Kansas House Agriculture Committee and Senator Jerry Moran. An energetic and inspiring keynote address was provided by Nathan Hylia of Kanati Land Management. Hylia focused on

- building relationships with landowners to elevate customer service in conservation.
- utilizing the power of partnerships to help improve the land.

Water and funding dedicated to water quality and water quantity took center stage during the conservation symposium on day three of the annual event where CEU credits were available as a new feature this year. Speakers included representatives from

- Groundwater Management District 4
- Kansas Water Office
- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Kansas State University Research & Extension
- Heartland Soil Services
- Kansas Department of Health & Environment
- City of Garden City.

Other items on the three-day agenda included:

- Breakout sessions from the Kansas Soil Health Alliance and the Kansans for Conservation and The Kansans for Conservation Coalition
- The nine KACD Committees held their annual business sessions.

- Conservation district employees also participated in two professional development sessions.
- Over 60 student winners were announced from across the state who had participated in the conservation poster, limerick, photo and speech contests.
- The top youth award went to Noah Goss of Ellsworth County for her first-place speech on soil health.

The Annual KACD Convention wrapped up with the conservation awards banquet celebrating a year of conservation success and outstanding service. The following awards were presented:

- Outstanding Supervisor Award to Calvin Boyd, Barber County.
- Don Rezac Memorial Award to Trent Winter, Washington County
- Pat Lehman Legacy Award to Frank Littler, Rush County.
- Pollinator Habitat Improvement Award to Eric & Tina Carlson, Linn County
- Grassland Merit Award to Max Nichols and Russell Blew, Barber County.
- District Professional Award from the Employees Organization to Stephanie Royer, District Manager in Rush County.
- Outstanding Volunteer awards were presented by NRCS to the Barton County Victory Garden and Brenda Matson, Sedgwick County.
- Leopold Conservation Award was presented to Ray and Susan Flickner from Wichita.
- Photos of all the awardees are available at [www.kacd.net](http://www.kacd.net)

KACD and its member will gather for the 80<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention on November 24-26, 2024 in Wichita.

Learn more about KACD and the programs and services they offer at [www.kacd.net](http://www.kacd.net)

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