

# FIELD STUDIES IN SALINE COUNTY, KANSAS & ALONG THE SMOKY HILL RIVER

## SMOKY HILL RIVER RESEARCH & EDUCATION SYMPOSIUM

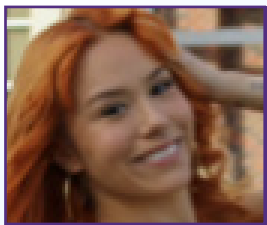
THURSDAY, MAY 7<sup>TH</sup>, 2026 | 6:30 PM

KANSAS WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY  
PETERS SCIENCE HALL, ROOM 229

- 6:30 **RiverSense: A Solar-Powered LIDAR River Depth Monitoring System for Environmental Data Collection**  
Conner Kirby, *Senior Financial Math and Physics Majors*
- 6:45 **Exploring Local Ecosystems as a Community**  
Alan Morales, *H.S. Sophomore* & David Green, *Instructor (Grades 10-12); both of Sacred Heart Jr/Sr High School*
- 7:00 **Cloudy Waters: How Turbidity Influences Protozoan Life**  
Kelsey Shields, *Junior Biology Major* & Rebecca Kennon, *Junior Biology Major*
- 7:15 **Light-Dependent Predation: How Sunlight Affects Fish Response to Bait Color**  
Jack Hanson, *Senior Biology Major* & Zac Daley, *Sophomore Biology Major*
- 7:30 **Effects of Water Flow on Phytoplankton Activity**  
Annabelle Cacho, *Senior Biology Major*
- 7:45 **Microbial Abundance and Diversity in Urban vs. Rural Locations Along the Smoky Hill River in Salina, Kansas**  
Sebastian Welter, *Senior Biomedical Chemistry, Chemistry, and Biology Majors*
- 8:00 **Under the Same Moon: Urban and Rural Differences in Mammal Movement**  
Tyra Thompson, *Senior Biology Major* & Dominick Etheridge, *Senior Biology Major*



# BIOGRAPHIES



## **Annabelle Cacho**

I am a senior at KWU and am from Kansas City, Kansas. I came to Kansas Wesleyan to play for the Women's Volleyball team and stayed because of the academic culture. My goal is to finish my undergraduate degree and then attend a veterinary technician school to become a vet technician for an animal hospital in Kansas City.



## **Zac Daley**

I am a sophomore from Wagoner, Oklahoma. I came to KWU to learn, get involved on campus and play tennis. I am the Student Government Association President for the school, a freshman orientation leader, a Wesleyan Experience freshman peer mentor, member of the Coyote Activity Board, and a member of the STEM Club. After obtaining my undergraduate degree, I plan to attend medical school to become a family physician back in Oklahoma.



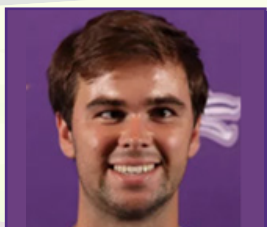
## **David Green**

I teach science to grades 10-12 at Sacred Heart Jr Sr High School and am the Scholars Bowl Coach, Science Olympiad Coach, and Jr Civitan Sponsor. I earned a B.S. in Biochemistry and B.A. in Psychology at the University of Kansas, studied Theology at the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Osijek, Croatia, and earned my Masters in Education at Fort Hays State University.



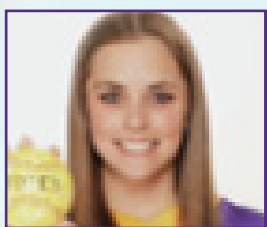
## **Nick Etheridge**

I am a senior majoring in biology and minoring in health. I chose to come to Kansas Wesleyan mainly because of basketball. I want to get my master's degree in clinical nutrition and work in family medicine to eventually have my own practice. I also want to incorporate some type of chiropractic or osteopathic manipulative treatment.



## **Jack Hanson**

I am a senior from Edmond, Oklahoma. I came to KWU to pursue collegiate tennis and study biology. I am also involved in campus ministries at KWU. Next year I am going to a chiropractic school in Dallas, TX.



## **Becca Kennon**

I am a junior at Kansas Wesleyan University pursuing a degree in Biology. I am also involved in the varsity softball team. I plan to go to medical school after my time here at KWU. My future goal is to become a diagnostic radiologist.

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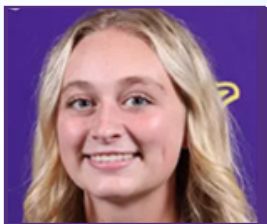
## Conner Kirby

I am a senior at Kansas Wesleyan University, majoring in financial math and physics. At KWU I have had the privilege of serving as treasurer of the STEM Club while also competing on the bowling and esports teams. Looking ahead, I am eager to launch my career as an actuary back in my hometown Bryant Arkansas and put my analytical background to work in the professional world.



## Alan Morales

I am a Sophomore at Sacred Heart High School. This year, I have taken part in several extracurricular activities, including Varsity Soccer at Salina South, Science Olympiad, and Scholars Bowl. Several favorite hobbies include playing sports, video games, and the piano. This summer, I plan on working as a lifeguard at Kenwood Cove.



## Kelsey Shields

I am currently a junior at Kansas Wesleyan University pursuing a degree in Biology. I serve as a KWU Resident Assistant, the Chair of the KWU Women in STEM, and the KWU Student Steward for the Resilience Studies Consortium. I plan to attend veterinary school after graduation.



## Tyra Thompson

I am a senior at KWU and chose to attend this university because it is close to home and is a smaller school which makes it easier to get to know people. My career goal is to work in conservation at Yellowstone National Park.



## Sebastian Welter

I am a senior, triple-majoring in Biomedical Chemistry, Chemistry, and Biology. I am from Cleveland, Ohio, and came to KWU to pursue continued learning and conduct research. I am the President of the Biology Club, a student representative on Tree Campus USA, and a representative at the Student Government Association. I am also a member of the STEM Club and the MechaCoyotes Robotics Team. I also was the Campus Student Steward for the Resilience Studies Consortium for two years. Starting in Fall 2026, I will attend the University of Missouri at Columbia to pursue a Ph.D. in Chemistry with an emphasis on supramolecular chemistry.