

“Amazing” and “incredible” are just two ways Caledonia Middle School students Arleigh Browning and Abigail Wilds described their participation in the Future Business Leaders of America, Inc. National Leadership Conference (NLC) on June 27-30 in Atlanta, Georgia.

The event, which was for middle and high school students, featured dozens of competitive events, learning workshops and the Future Leaders Expo Hall. In all, more than 14,000 attended the collegiate and middle/high school events from 47 states, territories and countries. The collegiate event was held prior to the middle/high school gathering.

“It was super fun and hands on,” said Browning, who is in her first year as a member of FBLA. “You get to go to different booths, and there is a bunch of different stuff you can do. You get to meet new people and learn more about your subject.”

Any FBLA member can attend the NLC. Most students do so to compete in more than 100 competitive events. For most events, students must qualify for nationals through their performance in competitive events at state conferences; many states also have qualifying district/regional competitive events.

In addition to the competitive events, students also met with representatives from colleges, universities and potential employers at the Expo Hall and had opportunities to network with peers from across the country. The Future Leaders Expo featured 72 unique exhibitors, and more than \$115,000 in prize money and 104 scholarships were awarded.

“My mom and I did a workshop, and it was really good,” said Wilds, who also is in her first year as a member of FBLA. “It is stuff you need to hear and you need to know this stuff.”

Wilds said one workshop focused on financial literacy and planning a financial future, while Browning said there were stations where participants could learn more about grant opportunities as well as plenty of college preparatory information.

Browning and Wilds both recommended FBLA to other middle school students as a great way to get a jump start on their financial and educational futures.

FBLA, Inc. is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) education association with active middle school, high school and college chapters worldwide. It inspires and prepares students to become community-minded business leaders in a global society through relevant career preparation and leadership experiences. For more information, visit fbla.org.