

## Press Clippings 6/9/2018

---Daily Herald--- 6/9/18

### **Donations, volunteers needed for Project Backpack**

Event serves students in need in ECC's footprint

BY MADHU KRISHNAMURTHY



Volunteers distribute new backpacks to students in need during the 2015 Project Backpack event at Elgin Community College. This year's giveaway will be Aug. 11. *Daily Herald File Photo 2015*

Elgin Community College is seeking volunteers and donations of school supplies for its annual Project Backpack benefiting students in need.

The community-based initiative runs from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Aug. 11 in ECC's Building J Spartan Events Center, 1700 Spartan Drive, Elgin.

Since its inception in 2010, Project Backpack has served more than 12,500 students within the college's footprint. Last year, more than 1,400 backpacks were distributed to families. The goal this year is to give out between 1,800 and 2,000 backpacks and so far officials have 400 backpacks left over from last year.

"It's incredibly moving to see the impact this event has on so many families in our community," said Megan Highland, Student Life coordinator and Project Backpack lead. "Thousands of smiling students have left the event wearing their new backpack full of supplies and excited to start the upcoming school year. Seeing students receive the supplies they need to learn is a wonderful experience, and it's all made possible by the many generous donors and volunteers."

To be eligible to receive backpacks, students must provide proof of residency or fall enrollment in **Elgin Area School District U-46**, Algonquin-based Community Unit District 300, Burlington-based Central Unit District 301, St. Charles Unit District 303, Keeneyville District 20 or ECC.

Backpacks filled with school supplies are distributed on a first-come, first-served basis with a limit of one backpack per student. Several community agencies and services, such as vision screening, also will be available at the event to help participating families.

"Backpacks aren't enough so we've expanded the event a little bit to include more resources," said Amybeth Maurer, ECC Student Life and first-year programs director.

"We are just trying to reach out into our community to see where the greatest needs are."

List of needed school supplies include: gender-neutral backpacks, pocket folders, wide-rule spiral notebooks, filler paper (150-200 count, wide rule), standard yellow wood No. 2 pencils (10 count), black pens, scissors, glue sticks (0.21 ounce), rulers, and crayons (24 count).

Donations are being accepted through July 23 at multiple locations and can be dropped off between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday through Thursday at ECC's Student Life Office, Building B, Room B173. To make a monetary donation, find additional [public collection sites](#) or for more information, visit [project-backpack.org](http://project-backpack.org) or call the ECC Student Life Office at (847) 214-7370 or (847) 888-5000, ext. 4211, to hear information in Spanish. Volunteers interested in helping stuff backpacks Aug. 8 or 9 or during the Aug. 11 event can register online.

Project Backpack is sponsored by ECC, [Elgin Community College Faculty Association](#), [Community Crisis Center of Elgin](#), [ECCP3](#), [Kane County Regional Office of Education](#), [Kane County Teachers Credit Union](#), U-46 and [United Way of Elgin](#).

## SPORTS SECTION

---Daily Herald--- 6/10/18

### **Elgin's Graves leaves a legacy of hard work becoming success**

BY JOHN RADTKE



Elgin's Kylie Graves, carrying water at the recent National Random Acts of Kindness Week, has been selected as the 2017-18 Daily Herald Fox Valley Female Athlete of the Year. *Submitted photo*

Many high school student-athletes lead busy lives.

**Elgin High School's Kylie Graves** has been really busy.

As in insanely busy.

In addition to being a three-sport athlete all four years of her high school career, Graves became involved in a multitude of clubs and projects that she invested a ton of time in --

things like Best Buddies (Maroon Buddies) and being a class, club and school officer, among other things.

Oh, and she just happened to find time to become Elgin's valedictorian of a senior class of over 600.

Because she epitomizes the true meaning of student-athlete, Graves has been selected the 2017-18 Daily Herald Fox Valley Female Athlete of the Year.

"The words that best describe her are leadership and character," said Dr. Nick Bumbales, who coached Graves in basketball as well as taught her in Honors Physics class. "Kylie is a hard worker who is dedicated and committed to all that she does and she pursues her athletic and academic passions with great effort."

In addition to playing three sports -- volleyball, basketball and soccer -- Graves was president of the Maroon Platoon, which is Elgin High's spirit committee; president of Interact, the school's volunteering club; vice president of the class council; secretary of the Spanish Honor Society; secretary of the school's Spanish club; youth recruitment chair for the Relay For Life; and, a member of the student council and National Honor Society.

But the one thing Graves is most proud of is that she and her younger sister, Emily, co-founded Maroon Buddies, which is dedicated to creating opportunities and friendships for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

That involvement has also spurred Graves, 18, to pursue a degree in neuroscience beginning this fall at Boston University.

"I was at Camp Soar last summer, which is a camp for kids with disabilities, and I started talking to one of the parents of one of my campers," Graves said. "They were taking him to someone to work on his behaviors and figuring out what was going on in his head as he was doing it and as they were explaining it to me and as I was working with him during the week I started realizing this is really cool and this is kind of what I want to do. Neuroscience really popped out to me because I can study not only people with disabilities but also gifted people."

After that experience Kylie and Emily decided to form a chapter of Best Buddies at Elgin High.

"It's a club that includes people in the special ed program and it's our way of integrating them better into the school and that's something that every school I applied to for next year had to have -- a Best Buddies chapter," Kylie said. "It's something that's very important to me and something I want to continue past high school."

So successful in that endeavor, Graves as president, and her executive board, were named the Executive Board of the Year by Best Buddies of Illinois.

In athletics Graves didn't play on championship teams at Elgin, and in some cases her teams didn't win a lot of games. But she persevered and became a mentor and leader to younger athletes.

She was a three-time captain of the girls basketball team and her contributions to that program helped initiate the Kylie Graves Leadership Award, which will be given annually to a member of the girls basketball program who exhibits the direction, guidance and management of true leadership.

It did take some adjusting when Graves entered Elgin High, especially after a youth soccer career with Sockers that included multiple championships.

"My whole life I've been on really competitive teams," she said. "I played for Sockers and we won a lot so freshman year was a huge wake-up call for me. I just didn't know how to react. It was hard to realize that regardless of how much we put into it it wasn't always going to go our way. But I realized that even though we were putting our best foot forward sometimes the other team was just better. Once I realized that as long as I was doing the best I could and my teammates were putting forth the best effort they could, it made it easier to handle. We weren't winning but we were playing better and improving and having fun together."

Sports also became a release for Graves, a time to put everything else aside for a couple hours each day.

"Volleyball season was the brunt of the whole college process and I'd go to practice and we'd be serving and it was a way of relieving all the stress," she said.

"I think I got closest with my basketball teammates. We got really close this year and just going there and talking to them and laughing and practicing was a great way to forget about everything else going on. For 2½ hours every night I would just be there having fun with my friends."

Graves doles out gratitude to many for shaping her into the young woman she has become, including her parents Corey and Stacy, her twin siblings Braden and Emily, and her younger brother Derrick.

"My sister helped me winning and losing thing," Kylie said. "I've played sports with her since she was born and she's definitely going to be my hardest goodbye. She's impacted everything I've done."

"My parents have been incredible. One of them was at every single game we played. And all of my coaches have been amazing and not just on the court or field. Doc wrote my recommendation letter and helped me through the college process. Mr. (Scott) Stewart (Elgin's girls volleyball coach) is the club adviser for Best Buddies and if I hadn't met him through volleyball I never would have felt comfortable going to him to ask him to help me and my sister do this."

And now, as she leaves Elgin High, Graves knows exactly how she'd like to be remembered.

"I just want people to realize how much hard work can do for you," she said. "If I came in freshman year and just walked through the halls no one would know who I am. I've made my name here just by getting involved and trying different things and trying to talk to different people rather than just sticking with one friend group."

"The biggest thing is the drive to do more. I want people to realize they have opportunity here and you're not confined to a little box of what you can do. The possibilities are endless here. I took advantage of them and I hope other people realize they can to."