

Press Clippings 7/23/2018

NOTE: There were no U-46 related news stories in the July 20-21, 2018 newspapers.

---Courier-News--- 7/22/18

ECC hosts first manufacturing camp for teens



Elgin Community College welding instructor Marc Hucek, middle, demonstrates stick welding to students at Elgin Community College. (Rafael Guerrero / The Courier-News)

Rafael Guerrero

Marc Hucek spent a portion of Tuesday afternoon moving from one welding station to the next, checking in on his students. Some were using the welding booths for only the first time.

The students were also younger than the typical welding classrooms Hucek teaches at Elgin Community College. They were all ages 14 to 16.

“I think they’re rolling with the punches...they’re taking (welding) in stride,” said Hucek, an assistant welding professor at ECC. “I told them earlier that I was very impressed with them.”

The dozen students were ECC's first group in its new, weeklong manufacturing camp. The students spent Monday through Thursday learning about several manufacturing professions and skills in welding, computer-aided drawing, HVAC and others.

The college is the latest effort by an educational institution or school district in and around Elgin ramping up efforts to get teenagers more interested in trades and vocations. School District U46, for instance, is attempting to adopt career academies in its high schools. U46, School District 300, District 303, District 301 and others are collaborating to adopt a regional pathways network where students can participate in career and technical education programs that may not be offered at their home school.

"These are skilled trades," said Hucek, one of three instructors in the camp, along with two college student aides. "It's not unusual for a journeyman to make six figures and not have student debt. We need more people doing these trades."

"It's nice to be able to show the kids there's more than just working in an office after high school," added Mike Marin, an HVAC instructor at ECC, who was scheduled to work with the students on the topic and about sheet metal.

The camp was made possible through a Fabricators and Manufacturing Association grant, ECC officials said. Twelve teenagers enrolled in the camp session.

Instructors said students spent Monday working on how to draw using computer-aided drawing programs. Tuesday's instruction and activities revolved around welding. Wednesday would focus on HVAC and sheet metal. Thursday's final session was scheduled to include a field trip to Motorola.

The dozen students come from Elgin, St. Charles, Gilberts, South Elgin and Hanover Park. Brock Russell, of South Elgin, said he wanted to enroll in the camp because he is an aspiring engineer. A hands-on camp like ECC's manufacturing camp helps Russell better envision how some skills can be used in the real world, he said.

Russell appreciated Tuesday's welding projects and lessons. "Even though there's a lot of people going into welding, there's still a lot of demand, from building the tallest skyscrapers to making your phones," the 15-year-old said.

Whether the camp will be offered next year is still being determined, said Cathy Taylor, ECC's interim associate dean of sustainability, business & career tech.

“Given the success we are experiencing with our first year offering a manufacturing program to middle school and high school students, we see the importance of providing this opportunity again to help meet a growing demand for skilled labor in the Elgin area,” she said in an email.

---Daily Herald---7/23/18

State's denial of grants could hurt suburban students; U-46 leads appeals



Madhu Krishnamurthy

Elgin Area School District U-46 tops a list of suburban school districts appealing the state's denial of funding for preschool programs serving hundreds of children this school year.

And state education officials are scrambling to find money elsewhere to fulfill their requests.

The Illinois State Board of Education allocated roughly \$87 million for two Early Childhood Block Grants -- Preschool For All Expansion and Prevention Initiative.

But this year state officials changed the way grants would be distributed by requiring public schools statewide to compete for funding with private programs, including day care centers, nurseries and private preschools. That process provided funding for 5,000 additional children. Yet, the influx of applicants meant the money could not fully meet the need statewide, said Jackie Matthews, ISBE spokeswoman.

Suburban districts denied or receiving reduced funding include U-46, Addison District 4, Antioch Elementary District 34, Bensenville Elementary District 2, Glen Ellyn District 41, Keeneyville District 20, West Chicago District 33 and Wood Dale District 7.

U-46 requested more than \$1 million through the Prevention Initiative grant that would have supported expansion of its home-visiting services for low-income and at-risk families with children from birth to 3 years old. It has provided those services since the 1980s to help families prepare children for kindergarten through parent education around child development, and encouraging parents to be involved with their children at a young age.

The state's second-largest school district, serving just under 40,000 students, U-46 employed four full-time parent educators to serve 40 families through home visits in the 2017-18 school year -- funded through a \$339,000 state grant.

Additional funding requested for this school year would have allowed the district to hire 10 parent educators to serve 150 families, said Peggy Ondera, U-46 director of early learners initiatives.

The district appealed June 18. It takes roughly 60 days for a review. If money isn't available, U-46 might use other funds to expand the program.

"We are really waiting to find out what happens with the appeal before we make any determination on what our next steps will be," Ondera said.

West Chicago District 33 will receive roughly \$410,000 less funding across three early childhood grants, which brought in more than \$2.4 million in 2017-18. It converted its half-day preschool program into a full-day program at the urging of state officials.

"We feel that we have a strong case," Superintendent Charles Johns said. "Our program was specifically designed to meet the ISBE specifications. It is extremely perplexing to see that we had a 16 percent reduction in funding despite being directed to ramp up to a more costly program."

Even if funding doesn't come through, the district will provide early childhood programming as planned this year, he added.

"Our families, students and staff are all relying on those plans," Johns said. "We are hoping that our appeal will be successful. There have been signs of hope coming from downstate and, in the past, the state had remaining funds at the end of the year that we anticipate being able to access."

Wood Dale District 7 applied for \$750,000 with the goal of expanding preschool services to offer a full-day of programming for some students. The district was awarded \$418,000 -- consistent with previous years' funding.

"We will not be cutting any programs, but we will not be expanding any either," Superintendent John Corbett said.

Antioch District 34 was denied a \$93,310 Prevention Initiative grant, which officials planned to use for existing services, hiring an extra parent educator and providing access to mental health providers in schools. Without the funding, it will have to pay for parent educators' salaries itself, Superintendent Jay Marino said.

State officials are trying to secure roughly \$20 million for grant requests that weren't approved but met the eligibility criteria, working in collaboration with the Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development and the Department of Human Services. Eligible applicants will be notified as soon as an agreement and funding amounts are finalized, Matthews said.