

## Press Clippings 8/21/2018

---Daily Herald--- 8/21/18

### **How a group of bikers put a bullied Streamwood teen on 'Cloud 9'**

Charles Keeshan

The bullying got so bad for Megan Kuntz last year that she had to eat lunch in a school office to avoid classmates who took her food and threw it in the trash.

It got so bad that some students at Canton Middle School in Streamwood hurled anti-gay epithets at her because she was the only girl on her youth football team.

It finally got so bad that her mom pulled her out of classes for the final two weeks of the last school year and Megan completed her coursework from home.

So it was understandable that there was plenty of trepidation for the 13-year-old Streamwood girl when it came to returning to school after summer break.

Those fears were set aside, at least for one day, when a few dozen tough-looking (but kindhearted) bikers escorted Megan to Canton on Monday in a show of support that had the eighth-grader excited about school for the first time in a long time.

"She's on Cloud 9 today," Megan's mom, Jill Kuntz, said after her daughter fist-bumped her way through a column of bikers and made her way to class Monday morning.

Megan's special trip came together quickly and, as is often the case these days, through social media. She and her mom were driving together last week when they came across a group of motorcyclists. Megan waved hello and inspiration struck.

"She said 'Mom, how cool would it be to show up to school on the back of a motorcycle with a bunch of bikes'," Jill Kuntz said.

Jill shared her daughter's thoughts on Facebook, and the idea went viral from there. Paul Muttini, one of Megan's Monday escorts, said her story spread coast-to-coast and even to Alaska.

Many of the bikers who took part in Monday's ride didn't know one another beforehand, but were drawn to Megan's story and the opportunity to give her spirits a boost, he said.

"It's just a bunch of bikers getting together about something that's got to stop," Muttini added. "Everyone thinks bikers are mean, bad guys. Obviously not."

Jill Kuntz said she worked with Canton administrators last year to address the bullying. She even took part in meetings with parents of the worst offenders, but their efforts did little to end the harassment.

"At some point, the parents need to parent," she said.

Mary Fergus, spokeswoman for Elgin Area School District U-46, said administrators hope to continue working with Megan's family to address the situation.

"Our principals talk about bullying often and how to deal with it," Fergus said. "We don't tolerate it and want to eliminate it."

Before being escorted to school Monday, Megan and the motorcyclists met in a store parking lot near her home. There, they gave Megan riding gloves and a jean jacket inscribed with her football-inspired nickname, "Tackle."

"When they pulled up, her jaw just dropped," Jill Kuntz said. "She was up at 4 a.m. this morning she was so excited about it."

It wasn't just bikers at Canton to support Megan. Sandy and Craig Reeves from the anti-bullying organization Stand for the Silent were there as well.

"We believe no child should feel unsafe and not feel comfortable at their school," Sandy Reeves said. "You don't push a child out of school because you don't like them."

- Staff photographer Bev Horne contributed to this story

## **Boys soccer: South Elgin, Streamwood open with wins**

Daily Herald report

Ryan Doherty and Anthony Sisler scored second half goals Monday to lead the South Elgin boys soccer team to a 2-1 nonconference win over St. Charles East.

Jacob Zupan and Julian Defensor provided the assists for the Storm in the season opener for both teams.

Christian Andrew made 10 saves in goal for the winners.

Renato Avendano scored off an assist from George Maridis for SCE. Jack Settle and Zach Doerr shared time in goal for the Saints with each making 1 save.

Streamwood 4, Geneva 1: Josh Taboda, Rolando Martinex, Jesus Limon and Alex Chavez scored goals for the Sabres, who opened the Upstate Eight season with a win. Bryan Mora had 3 assists and Chavez one for Streamwood. Hector Alfaro and Antonio Herrera made 2 saves each in goal.

CL South 6, Grant 2: Alex Canfield scored twice and had 2 assists to lead the Gators (1-0) to a nonconference win. Ryan Coughlin added 2 goals for Crystal Lake South while Sabien Raymond and Michal Dejworek added the other scores. Oscar Estrada and Matt McCaleb split time in goal, combining for 2 saves.

---Courier-News--- 8/21/18

## **Paraeducators gets 3 percent annual raises for next 4 years under new contract with U46**

BY RAFAEL GUERRERO

Paraeducators at School District U46 will receive long-awaited pay raises thanks to a new four-year contract approved Monday night by the school board.

The vote was 5-1 in favor of the agreement between the Elgin-area district and the District U-46 Educational Assistants union, which represents about 600 paraprofessionals, including teachers assistants, sign-language interpreters and home/school liaisons.

On average, paraprofessionals will receive a 3 percent pay raise per year, U46 Chief Operations Officer Jeff King told board members. At previous meetings, union officials said the median annual wage for U46 paraprofessionals under the former contract was \$18,406, a poverty-level salary for someone with a family of four.

The new contract also calls for employees to pay more toward their health insurance, increasing the contribution from 10 percent under the old contract to 15 percent over the course of the new one.

King said there were additional language changes in the contract governing such things as customer service improvement and guidelines for when paraeducators can take breaks or lunch.

The U46 paraeducators had been working without a contract deal for more than a year. Some of the summer school board meetings were filled to capacity by union members urging the board to pressure administrators to hear their calls for pay raises and other contract issues.

This was the second contract U46 has settled with a union in 2018. Earlier this year, a new deal was struck with the union representing school secretaries.

Still unsettled is a new contract with U46 teachers. The existing deal is set to expire this month, and teachers have already rejected one proposed pact calling for the complete restructuring of the pay system.