

## Press Clippings 8/22/2018

---Courier News--- 8/22/18

### Paraeducators get 3% annual raises

Increase will continue for next 4 years under new contract with U46

BY RAFAEL GUERRERO



Members and supporters of the District U-46 Educational Assistants union picketed outside of U46 School Board meetings this summer in an effort to secure pay raises in their new contract. (Shannon Bataille Dunn)

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 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.

“While DUEA members are glad we have a new agreement with the district, we’d like to make it clear that our members, who work with the district’s most vulnerable students, are still making poverty-level wages,” said Sara Moeller, the paraeducators’ union

president. "The board of education made a step in the right direction during our negotiating sessions, but we still need to do better."

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.

---Daily Herald--- 8/22/18

## **South Elgin High junior takes first in machining competition**

SUBMITTED BY TECHNOLOGY & MANUFACTURING ASSOCIATION



**Hailey Harden, a junior at South Elgin High School, wins first place in the 27th annual Precision Machining Competition.** *Courtesy of Technology & Manufacturing Association*

Hailey Harden is in her second year studying precision machining at South Elgin High School. The high school junior raised eyebrows earlier this month when she won first place in NIMS Intermediate Division at the Technology & Manufacturing Association's 27th annual Precision Machining Competition.

"I didn't know what I wanted to do for a career, so as a freshman, I was looking through what was offered at South Elgin, and I saw 'production tech'," Hailey said. "'Ok,' I thought, this is kinda cool."

Once she got into class starting her sophomore year, Hailey says, she thought the class none of her friends was interested in was fun.

"I really didn't know what I was getting into, but I it didn't take long for me to realize I really loved it," she said.

Not only did Hailey love precision machining, she found she was really good at it.

Russ Bartz, Hailey's production tech instructor, said he saw that as one of two girls in the program, Hailey was a natural in the class.

Bartz said he encourages all his students to take on projects affiliated with the National Institute for Metalworking Skills (NIMS) program. If they excel with those projects, they're automatically prepared to take a NIMS test and earn certification for that field of machining.

South Elgin is a select high school that through its curriculum and instructor's credentials has earned credentials to partner with the national assessment program for metalworking skills.

Bartz himself was a machine operator for 20 years and accumulated six NIMS credentials, while he studied for bachelor's and master's degrees, qualifying him to teach high school. After 13 years of developing the program, Bartz now has almost 40 students in production tech.

Over the years, Bartz says his students acquired scholarships from the Haas Foundation, while others launched careers where the employer pays for education and training. Still, other students are attending four-year colleges for degrees in mechanical engineering.

Hailey says she's interested in pursuing a manufacturing career, most likely in CNC programming. However, she's open to other career paths in manufacturing -- and as a woman, she's a segment of society more and more company owners are reaching out to in order to fill the industry's nationwide growing skills gap.

"It's hard to get promotion for production tech," Bartz said. "There's an impression that going into trades will limit education. That's simply not true."

The opportunities to be trained, learn and compete are more and more all the time, Bartz said.

And that's good for students like Hailey Harden.

She not only won first place in her division among over 250 high school students at TMA's precision machining competition, she won fifth place statewide in the Skills USA competition this year.

The classes have changed not only Hailey's thoughts for a career, but the way she looks at the world. "After taking this class, I can look at stuff and think about the process it would take to make it, that's different from the way I used to see the world," she said.

Learn more about TMA by visiting [TMAIllinois.org](http://TMAIllinois.org).

## **SPORTS SECTION**

---Courier News--- 8/22/18

### **BOYS SOCCER: Lopez the leader**

Goal-scoring forward the marquee name for experience Elgin

BY PATRICK MCGAVIN

Two years ago, a young and talented Elgin soccer team experienced a void at the most crucial spot. Forward Omar Lopez was that missing piece.

After making a strong debut with the Maroons as a freshman, Lopez elected to play with an Elgin-based travel team that season.

“The year I played club, all of my friends were telling me to come back and play high school, and I decided to play with them again,” Lopez said. “It was technically the same game.”

Lopez made a spectacular return last season by scoring 26 goals in leading the Maroons (15-3-1) to a Class 3A regional championship game.

In his year away, Lopez remained close to the players in the Maroons program. Senior Elgin defender Alex Kunicki said his friends were thrilled by Lopez’s decision to come back.

“We wanted him to come back because we needed somebody who could score goals,” Kunicki said. “I have been playing with him for 10 or 11 years now, since we were in Under-8.

“At first he did not show a whole lot. After time passed, he really got good. He knows the game up and down, and he is always three steps ahead of everybody.”

Now a 5-foot-10 senior, Lopez has the size to play the ball in the air. He also has the foot speed and quickness to break down defenses and create havoc in the final third of the field.

“I think my style has always been pretty direct,” Lopez said. “I like to dribble a lot, play fast and play a lot of one- and two-touch soccer.

“During the time I was gone, I trained a lot by myself and worked really hard on my touch and finishing.”

Lopez also created for his teammates. He totaled 11 assists despite missing a couple of games with a groin injury, according to Elgin coach David Borg.

“Omar is very aware of space,” Borg said. “Even when double-teamed, his understanding and athleticism takes over. He has a vast array of shots and he knows when to really strike it or to use his touch.

“His conditioning is off the charts. In our tryouts, he ran a 5:11 mile.”

As the oldest child in his family, Lopez set his own template for success.

His father helped accelerate his early development by placing him in Elgin recreational leagues against older kids when Omar was just 4.

“Soccer is the only organized sport I have ever played,” Lopez said. “It just makes me happy playing, with the constant movement and the fact the action never stops.”

Lopez has developed into the headliner of a team with 15 returning players who saw action last year. The team is radiating excitement and optimism.

“It’s great to be back,” Lopez said. “These guys are my all best friends. We have grown up together. Most of the guys are seniors, and we want to win and go far.

“Last year after we had the great start, but then we got a little overconfident. Now this year, our mentality is to play hard every game.”

Patrick Z. McGavin is a freelance reporter for The Courier-News.

### Top 5 Teams

1. St. Charles North: Matt Beaulieu, Parker Kolb and Gabe D’Amico are returning cornerstones from the North Stars’ Class 3A fourth-place team. Joey Sommer keys the backline.
2. Dundee-Crown: Elite two-way player Jabari Washington combines with defender Ivan Aviles and goalkeeper Damian Smiech from an 18-1-2 regional finalist.
3. Elgin: “We are experienced, fast, big and hungry,” Maroons coach David Borg said. Alex Kunicki, Rafael Perez and Jesus Millan also excel.
4. Streamwood: Alex Chavez and Bryan Mora lead a group of 10 returnees from a 3A sectional finalist. Sophomore Jose Ibarra is an elite defender.
5. St. Charles East: Truitt Battin, George Maridis and Luke Schnitker are the top offensive threats from a 3A regional finalist. Gray Biddle anchors the defense.

### Top 10 Players

(in alphabetical order) Truitt Battin, St. Charles East, midfielder, senior; Matt Beaulieu, St. Charles North, senior, forward; Alex Chavez, Streamwood, senior, forward; Josh Johansen, St. Edward, junior, midfielder; Parker Kolb, St. Charles North, junior, midfielder; Omar Lopez, Elgin, senior, forward; Bryan Mora, Streamwood, senior, midfielder; Anthony Sisler, South Elgin, junior, forward; Jabari Washington, Dundee-Crown, senior, defender; Aleksandar Zdravkovic, Larkin, forward, junior.