

## Press Clippings 8/23/2018

---Daily Herald--- 8/23/18

### **U-46 paraeducators get raises, but union not entirely happy**

BY MADHU KRISHNAMURTHY

The **Elgin Area School District U-46** school board this week approved a four-year contract for paraeducators guaranteeing a roughly 3 percent yearly increase per employee on average.

The district and union have been negotiating for a year. The previous three-year contract, which expired a year ago, granted an hourly raise of 55 cents across all levels in fiscal year 2016 with an extra 15 cents per hour for home school liaisons. In fiscal year 2017, hourly rates increased by 2.75 percent across all levels.

"There will be no retro pay for fiscal year 2018," said Jeff King, U-46 chief operations officer. "This agreement sunsets the retirement clause ... increases health insurance contributions to 15 percent over the term of the contract."

Leaders of the District U46 Educational Assistants' (DUEA) union say though a step in the right direction, the approved contract falls short of providing living wages for the 600 members who deal with students' academic, social and emotional needs.

"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, union president and a U-46 paraeducator for 20 years. "This is not just an Elgin education issue, it's a women's rights issue because 90 percent of our membership is women. We will continue to push for better for our members and our students."

Moeller said more than 80 percent of members live in U-46 communities, 40 percent are primary income earners and 31 percent are sole income earners.

School board member Jeanette Ward cast the lone "no" vote. She objected to granting employees guaranteed raises not based on performance, which she said is rare in the private sector.