

Press Clippings - 4/19/2023

– NIU Today – U-46's first principal prep cohort nears August completion of master's degrees

April 18, 2023



Gladys Crespo

When **Gladys Crespo** graduated from high school in her native Puerto Rico, she planned to become an engineer.

That was her initial path in college as well, but it didn't last.

"I ended up teaching other students what they needed to do, and that was something that really became my passion," **Crespo** says, "and I said, 'You know, I really like math, and I really like to teach, so let me become a math teacher.' "

She achieved that ambition, which led to another: elementary education.

"After I became an elementary teacher, I had a lot of students who had IEPs and who had different special needs, and I was participating in their meetings," she says, "and I said, 'I'm making decision for these students, but I do not have a good background in the decisions I'm making,' so I decided to go back to the university for a degree in special

education.”

Once in that third phase of her career, the principal of her school moved in 2013 to work in Illinois – and **Crespo** followed.

Now 10 years later, she’s about to add another degree to her collection: an M.S.Ed. in Educational Administration from the NIU Department of Leadership, Educational Psychology and Foundations.

Crespo is one of the first six students from **School District U-46** to near completion of the program, part of the college’s PLEDGE (Partnering to Lead and Empower District-Grown Educators) initiative.

Joining 10 students from Rockford Public Schools 205’s second cohort, the future administrators are earning two-year master’s degrees grounded in exceptional curriculum, professional practice, strong mentoring in their local buildings and coaching from the Illinois Principals Association (IPA) – all with tuition paid by their school district.



Lela Majstorovic

“We are incredibly proud of the work that our resident administrators have done through our partnership with NIU and IPA, and we have seen tremendous growth in instructional leadership from our resident administrators as well as our host principal,” says **Lela Majstorovic, U-46 assistant superintendent of schools**. “We are fortunate to be able to support this intensive, job-embedded learning opportunity in order to sustain

high-quality leadership in U-46.”

“We have been extremely impressed with the quality of candidates U-46 has recommended for participation in the Rockford/U-46 Principal Preparation Program,” add Jim and Becky Surber, clinical assistant professors and co-coordinators of the principal preparation program. “These high-caliber individuals are exactly what we are looking for in our future educational leaders. Gladys and Jeron are clearly at a point where they are capable of successfully moving into full-time administrative positions.”

During the program, the aspiring administrators completed on-the-job paid internships in their districts to immediately apply the knowledge and skills of their coursework.

For Crespo, resident administrator at U-46’s Creekside Elementary School, the preparation has already led to a new role: a special education administrator.

U-46 classmate Jeron Shelton, resident administrator at Clinton Elementary School, also has secured a promotion for the fall. Shelton will become the principal of McKinley Elementary School.

“I never thought I’d be a principal,” says Shelton, whose career in education began in 2001 as a paraprofessional at Rockford’s Rolling Green Elementary School. “There was an email sent out that this program was available, and my wife forwarded the email to me and said, ‘I think you’d like this.’ ”



Jeron Shelton

Shelton, a seventh-grade English and social studies teacher at the time, had previously

worked at **U-46 headquarters** for six years.

When he returned to the classroom, he discovered a renewed fulfillment in teaching, but also a new perspective.

“When I went back to the classroom, I had done so many administrative duties at the district office that the way I was perceived and the way I interacted with my peers was very different,” he says. “And when I looked at the resident administrator program, I thought, ‘This matches my skill set.’ ”

Taking on that role at **Clinton** turned into an assistant principal-type experience.

His responsibilities have included managing the school’s professional learning community; providing professional development for, and appraisal of, teachers; and working with teachers on disciplinary issues.

“Slowly but surely, all of those experiences have just set me up to have the confidence to be able to leave the building,” **Shelton** says. “I feel the classwork has supplemented nicely, and everyone who’s a principal or administrator told me that this is awesome because people who are still in the classroom and getting their administration certificate can’t directly apply what they’re learning.”

His mandatory internship provided a safe place for learning.



Jeron Shelton, right, and **Jonathan Miquelon**, his mentor principal at **Clinton**

Elementary School in U-46.

“I don’t think you really understand the job unless you do it. There are so many things in the classroom that sound good in theory until you’re implementing them in practice and you have the opportunity to fail on a low-stakes scale,” he says. “I know that, in being a principal, I’m not going to be perfect. Things are going to go wrong. But I was able to kind of work out the kinks in this role with everyone understanding that I was still learning.”

Meanwhile, he’s already integrating himself at **McKinley, a dual-language school** that will require him to communicate in English and Spanish.

Shelton attended a nighttime event for families and starting to build relationships with the children there; the student newspaper already published a Q-and-A with **Shelton**, who told his young interviewer that “I’m going to stay here as long as I can because this is a wonderful community.”

“I also brought some cookies when I met my staff,” he says. “It was a recommendation from my IPA mentor, Pamela Schnoek, who has been a big part of my success. I reflect on my work weekly, and it has helped lower my stress level and keep me on track.”

Crespo has enjoyed the program’s cohort structure, allowing her to form a bond with fellow students who were gracious with the native Spanish speaker and constructive in their feedback regarding her strengths and areas for improvement.



Jim and Becky Surber

She also appreciated the mostly online format that kept to a minimum her required drives

to Rockford for face-to-face classes: “It’s a great advantage having a program where you don’t have to go every day to the university,” she says. “We have families. We have work.”

While in class, meanwhile, she has been grateful for authentic conversations that reflect the hands-on nature of the program – something she also credits for giving her a leg up in successfully interviewing for the special education administrator job.

“When we are bringing some examples to class, it’s not something we are reading in the book. It’s, ‘During this week, I have this situation,’ or, ‘How do I manage this situation?’ and ‘Oh, you should this,’ ” Crespo says. “It’s real. It’s not just the book.”

She also is pleased with her IPA coach, a curriculum tailored by U-46 and NIU “in a way that satisfies the needs of the district and the needs of the students” and the instruction and mentoring delivered by the Surbers.

“Everything starts with a good relationship,” Crespo says, “and they really try their best to make a good relationship with us. They know each of us. They know the needs that we have. They really work hard for us.”

– Examiner of Bartlett –

(This article also appeared in the Examiner of South Elgin/Examiner of Streamwood)

Expansive expenses list approved by U-46 board

April 19, 2023

By Seth Hancock

The Board of Education in School District U-46 voted 6-0, board member Dawn Martin was absent, on \$11.8 million in expenditure items at its Monday, March 20 meeting.

Included was a \$6.8 million proposal, paid through federal bailout funds, for 2023 summer programming with 12 agencies from \$57,600 with Next Wave STEM to \$2.1 million with Golden Corridor Family YMCA.

“Under this project, School District U-46 sought proposals for the provision of Summer Expanded Recreational Programming and support,” the proposal states. “The provider is responsible for all aspects of the programming including but not limited to creation, staffing, training, implementation, communication and monitoring of the programming.”

Costing \$1.9 million (operations and maintenance fund) with Trane Chicago Service, a three-year service contract was renewed “to maintain, service, and repair the district’s vast array of heating and cooling equipment,” the proposal states.

A parking lot reconstruction project at **Elgin's Larkin High School** was approved costing \$992,200 (operations and maintenance fund) with Schroeder Asphalt Services, Inc.

"**Larkin High School's** north parking lot, sidewalks, and some of the curbs are in a state of disrepair as there are numerous potholes, sinkholes, cracks, and heaving concrete; resulting in the need for replacement," the proposal states.

A three-year landscape maintenance service contract with T and T Landscape Construction, Inc. costing \$897,495 (operations and maintenance fund) was approved.

Three education fund items were approved including \$672,000 for a contract renewal with Edmentum/APEX Learning to provide "a wide range of solutions for credit recovery" for students missing graduation requirements, \$222,600 with Instructional Empowerment to "provide an enhanced Readiness Phase Assessment to establish a plan to address the system, instructional and leadership needs" at 13 schools labeled comprehensive or targeted by the state and \$37,500 with Community Unit School District 301 for 24 students who are in the veterinary assistant regional pathway program at the neighboring district, the proposals states.

A contract costing \$249,184, paid through federal grant funds, was approved with Talent Assessment, Inc. to "support classroom teachers by providing a hands-on program that multi-tasks career and life skills training, gives performance-based assessments, career exploration, work behavior development, and data collection," the proposal states.

Also approved 6-0 was \$4.7 million in itemized bills.

— Examiner of Bartlett —

(This article also appeared in the Examiner of South Elgin/Examiner of Streamwood)

Proposed U-46 expenses scheduled for approval

April 19, 2023

By Seth Hancock

The Board of Education in **School District U-46** is set to vote on \$2.6 million in expenditure items at its upcoming meeting on Monday, April 24. The items were presented on April 10. The largest item is a two-year contract renewal from Canvas, the district's learning

management system, costing \$1.5 million, from the education fund if approved.

Also from the education fund is a \$60,267 contract renewal with Advancement Via Individual Determination, a “nonprofit college and career readiness system designed to help students develop the skills they need to be successful in college,” the proposal states.

Various items will be paid by the nation’s taxpayers through federal assistance or grant funds, the largest being an amendment to a service agreement with Right at School (\$313,200) and the Boys and Girls Club of Elgin (\$270,000). “This is an amendment to the existing services agreement between Boys and Girls Club of Elgin and Right at School and School District U-46,” the proposal states. “These organizations will provide parents with extended care options for incoming [first through sixth grade] students participating in U-46 Summer School at the following sites: Clinton Elementary School, Coleman Elementary School, Creekside Elementary School, Sunnydale Elementary School, and Sycamore Trails Elementary School.”

The other federally funded items include \$271,691 with Easterseals Metropolitan Chicago for special education “professional development and coaching support,” \$165,928 with Discount School Supply to purchase kindergarten furniture and \$35,496 with Automotive Equipment Specialists to purchase an alignment machine for Elgin High School’s automotive program, the proposals state.

The remaining items are all operations and maintenance fund items, the largest being \$96,000 with Celtic Environment, Inc. for asbestos abatement projects as part of bathroom renovations at Elgin’s Channing Memorial Elementary and Kimball Middle School.

“In order to facilitate the work, the asbestos-containing materials (ACMs) need to be removed by a licensed environmental contractor per county, state, and federal regulations, as the materials will be disturbed,” the proposal states.

Two projects at Elgin’s Ronald D. O’Neal Elementary School were proposed including asbestos abatement through EHC Industries, Inc. (\$37,250) and hallway tile replacement

(\$35,122). A loading dock concrete repair project at **Elgin High School** through Abbey Paving (\$44,654) and concrete repair at the **Independence School for Early Learners** in Bartlett with Murphy Construction Services, LLC (\$39,300) were proposed.

— Examiner of Streamwood — Sabres softball seeking to improve with each game

April 19, 2023

By Seth Hancock

The **Streamwood** softball team's season is now underway as the **Sabres** sit at 1-7 overall, 0-4 in the Upstate Eight Conference.

The **Sabres** opened last week being no-hit in a pair of 15-0 UEC losses, the first at Glenbard East on Monday, April 10 then at **Streamwood** against Glenbard South on Tuesday, April 11.

Against East Aurora, the **Sabres** dropped an 18-5 UEC game on Thursday, April 13 at **Streamwood**. Kailey Pawlikowski (triple), Brianna Coffey and Marissa Walker all had two hits for **Streamwood**.

The **Sabres** then went 0-3 at the **Larkin Slugfest** on Saturday, April 15. **Streamwood** lost 14-0 to Dundee-Crown, 17-2 to **Elgin** and 6-5 to St. Edwards.

Pawlikowski had a big day with five hits and five RBI over the three games. Her performance included a home run and a double.

Although some early struggles, first year **Streamwood coach Nicolle Giliana** said the win-loss column isn't as important as seeing improvements with her squad which is made up entirely of underclassmen.

"Win or lose, I want these girls to reflect and think about how they played individually and as a team," said **Giliana** who added that she is seeing improvements each game.

Streamwood's first two weeks were a wash due to weather, but the **Sabres** opened the year with a 15-0 UEC loss at **South Elgin** on Thursday, April 6.

The **Sabres** bounced back with a 21-6 non conference win over Harvest Christian on Saturday, April 8 at **Streamwood**. Pawlikowski (2-for-3, double, three RBI), Sophie Saflarski (2- for-2, double, RBI), Hailey Dworak (three RBI), Walker (two RBI) and

Susana Alanis (two RBI) led the effort.

“After each and every game, I want the girls to take away how to be a team player, communicate and enjoy the little (and big) moments,” **Giliana** said. “After every win, I want the girls to recognize the victories, what we did that was good, how they felt during those plays, and be able to execute those plays again, but also be able to catch those errors and address how to fix them.

After a loss, the girls should be recognizing what errors were made, what they need to do to get better, and what they need to go home and work on.”

– Daily Herald –

Softball Notes

Big boost from Baylei

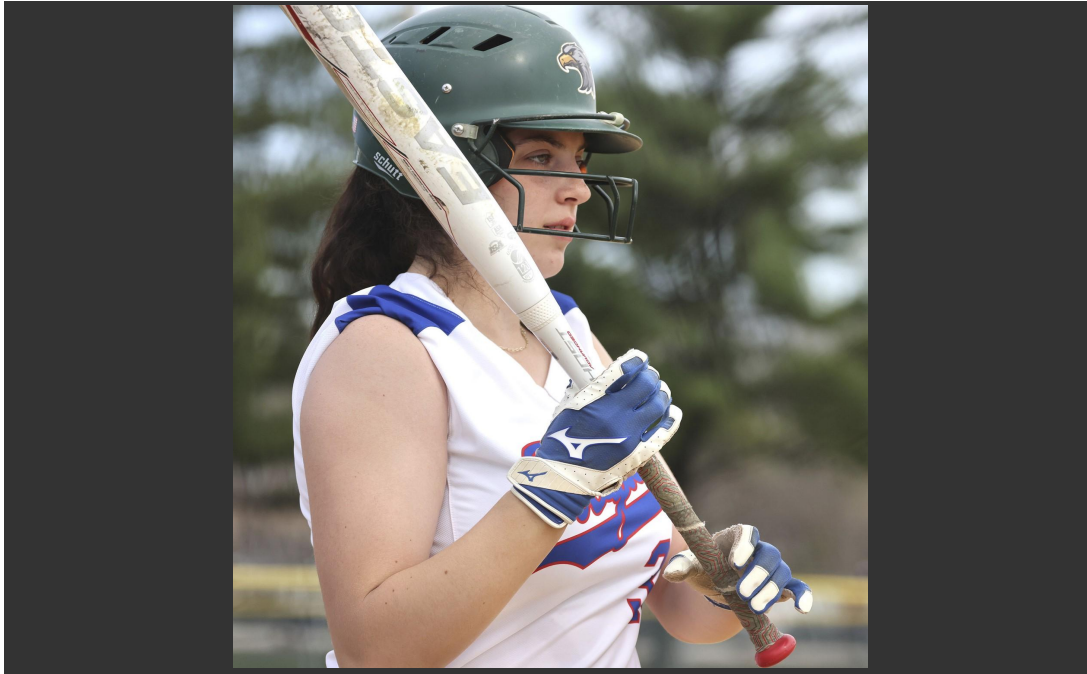
College basketball recruit makes triumphant return to softball field for Larkin: ‘These girls are like my sisters’

April 19, 2023

By Rick Armstrong - Beacon-News



Larkin's Baylei Johnson acknowledges the reaction from teammates after stealing second base against St. Edward on Saturday. H. Rick Bamman/Beacon-News Photos



Johnson waits on deck for a turn for an at-bat Saturday.
BY RICK ARMSTRONG BEACON-NEWS

Basketball may be No. 1 for **Larkin's Baylei Johnson**, but softball is an impressive No. 2.

It's no wonder **Royals coach Anne Vogt** is delighted the hard-hitting first baseman/catcher decided to return for her senior season, shortly after she committed to play NAIA basketball next season at St. Francis in Joliet.

It's turning out to be one special last hurrah.

"She wasn't quite sure until the second or third day of tryouts," Vogt said. "I said, 'Come to tryouts and let's see how it goes.'"

"She started to hit in the batting cage, was stinging it, and decided she wanted to finish with her senior year."

Stinging it, indeed.

The **Royals** (6-5) won two of three games Saturday to take second place in the eight-team **Larkin Slugfest** at the Elgin Sports Complex. As usual, **Johnson** led the way on offense.

The cleanup hitter went a combined 6-for-8 with three walks and two home runs as **Larkin** beat St. Edward 13-1 and **Bartlett** 5-3 before losing 11-4 to Dundee-Crown in the final.

Johnson hit two homers against **Bartlett** as the **Royals** avenged an 11-0 conference loss

Thursday to the **Hawks**. In just 11 games, she has also matched last season's eight homers.

"Hitting has always been a strong suit for me," **Johnson** said. "**Coach Vogt** has been my hitting instructor along with several travel program coaches. I've had my fair share of hitting lessons.

"I like to think of myself as a contact hitter who occasionally hits home runs."

She gave up travel softball last summer, though, to focus on a higher level of AAU basketball with her Mount Prospect-based Full Package team.

That helped her garner more recruiting attention as she expanded her game.

"We made it to the Nike finals at McCormick Place, which was invaluable for recruiting," **Johnson** said. "There were so many college coaches there. Interest picked up after that."

She went on to special mention all-state honors while finishing her high school basketball career with a rare double-double — topping 1,000 points and rebounds.

"**Baylei** came into high school primarily as a basketball player, and it was no secret," Vogt said. "If the roles had been reversed and she had wanted it to be softball, I have no doubt she could play it in college at a high level."

Johnson, who was all-state last season in softball, is hitting .645 this spring.

"I feel like my commitment to St. Francis took some weight off my shoulders," **Johnson** said. "But I definitely would have regretted it if I had chosen not to play this spring.

"These girls are like my sisters." Youth was served: Dundee-Crown, which has only two seniors, was led by junior pitcher McKayla Anderson at the **Larkin Slugfest**.

"She's getting it done," Chargers coach Matthew Goetz said of Anderson. "McKayla has good spin, and her fastball tops out at 67 mph."

Anderson (5-2), who beat Burlington Central 3-1 and **Larkin** 11-4 while striking out 12 and 10, respectively, has 96 strikeouts in 65 1/3 innings this spring.

Johnson, who was 4-for-4 with a double, was the only hitter Anderson couldn't solve. Dundee-Crown (8-5) opened the tourney with a win over **Streamwood**.

Freshmen Casi Attapit, who is hitting .438, and Jordyn Jeffs, who had a two-run homer in the championship game, have stepped up for the Chargers.

Welcome back: West Aurora coach Randy Hayslett is happy to have Katelyn Serafin back, even if only on a limited basis following elbow surgery.

The junior right-hander isn't available to pitch but she can hit as the designated player and returned last week to the outfield.

"She's a pretty darn good outfielder besides being a good pitcher," Hayslett said. "She's athletic and makes our defense a little better. At bat, she just comes out swinging."

Senior pitcher Alyssa Perkins was glad to see Serafin rejoin the lineup.

"She's got spunk," Perkins said. "Sometimes, she's a lot to handle, but it's great to have energy like that on the field."

— Daily Herald —

Softball rankings and player of the week

April 19, 2023



South Elgin's Cece Bell releases a pitch against **Bartlett** on April 10. Mark Kodiak Ukena/ Beacon-News

With records through Monday and previous rankings in parentheses.

1. Yorkville 13-1 (1)

Madi Reeves strikes out 31 in Southwest Prairie West wins over West Aurora, Plainfield North.

2. St. Charles North 8-1 (2)

Sophia Olman goes 7-for-13 with eight RBIs in four wins for North Stars.

3. Oswego 10-3 (4)

Aubriella Garza's hit parade reaches 27 in 13 games.

4. Benet 9-2 (7)

Redwings beat DuPage Valley Conference's top three in Metea, Waubonsie, Naperville Central.

5. Newark 14-0 (5)

Kodi Rizzo strikes out 12 in 4-1 non conference victory over Seneca.

6. St. Charles East 7-6-1 (3)

Freshman catcher Hayden Sujack has hit eight home runs this spring for Saints.

7. South Elgin 9-3 (8)

Hannah Harms hits .563 with a home run, four RBIs in big week for Storm.

8. Oswego East 8-4 (6)

Senior outfielder Mia Corres produces 19 hits, leads six Wolves with 14 or more hits.

9. Naperville North 8-4 (9)

With four home runs this season, Kristina Donaldson pushes career total to 14.

10. Dundee-Crown 8-5 (NR)

Strong pitching of McKayla Anderson lifts Chargers to Larkin Slugfest title.

Player of the Week

Cece Bell strikes out 22 in 16 innings for wins over Upstate Eight Conference foes Bartlett and Fenton and another over Fox Valley Conference leader Huntley. The Davenport recruit aided her cause with five hits and three RBIs.

— Rick Armstrong