

Press Clippings 10/15/2021

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Support group aims to help Latina teens who face a tough road trying to embrace both American and Hispanic cultures

By Mike Danahey



Clinical psychologist Magdalena Perez, left, and licensed counselor Michelle Diaz are Elgin natives who opened Luna Behavioral Health Center in downtown Elgin earlier this year and are launching Las Lunitas, a free support group for Latina teens. (Mike Danahey / The Courier-News)

Finding a way to straddle two worlds — one in a traditional Mexican home with immigrant parents and old-world ways and the other in an American high school that revolves around image, technology and success — is no easy feat for Latina girls, two Elgin therapists say.

“We know the hardship of immigrants and the struggle there can be to live between two cultures,” Magdalena Perez said. “Those struggles can be especially tough for teens, who are figuring out how to spread their wings and who they are.”

Perez and longtime friend Michelle Diaz are Elgin natives who set up their psychology and counseling practice, Luna Behavioral Health Center, in downtown Elgin. Both are first-generation Americans who remember navigating the divide between two very different lives.

To that end, they want to give teenage Latina girls the help they need as they try to fit into American culture while living in patriarchal homes in which one or both parents may not be completely fluent in English, they said. Their new support group will be a place where teens can speak freely about the difficulties they face.

“The goal of Las Lunitas is to help adolescent-aged Latinas — 14 to 18 years old — create a greater understanding of their overall identity,” Perez said.

Perez and Diaz both graduated from **Elgin High School**, with Perez completing a doctorate in clinical psychology at the University of Texas and Diaz becoming a licensed and certified counselor with a master’s degree in clinical mental health from Eastern Illinois University.

Both see their practice and this support group as ways to repay the city for giving them what needed to succeed, Perez said.

“As a native Elginites, I’ve dreamed of giving back to the community,” she said. “We’ve achieved great things because of the education we received here as well as family and community support, and feel we owe Elgin a bit. This is our way of paying back.”

Their specific backgrounds make it easy to empathize with girls who are having to overcome some of the same things they faced, they said.

Growing up bilingual, such teens often have to serve as translators for their parents who can need help navigating the school system, grocery shopping and doing other things their non-Latina counterparts don’t, which can create a divide.

In more traditional Latin American households, they must also deal with the concepts of machismo and marianismo, the two noted.

Macho is derived from the word machismo and its meaning is often the same -- men are supposed to be tough, masculine, in charge. Whereas women are taught marianismo, meaning they should be silent and submissive to men, chaste and at home with their parents until they marry.

Such views often conflict with the way they see other teens living or observe on TV or through social media, and as a result feeling pressure about body image, materialism, success and being liked, the therapists said.

Perez and Diaz have been reaching out to staff at **Elgin School District U-46**, the Elgin Police Department's Explorers program and the Elgin Hispanic Network to get the word out about La Lunitas and to encourage teens to participate.

The first of eight 90-minute support sessions will be at 9:30 a.m. Saturday, Oct. 23, at their 164 Division St. office. The first group will be limited to eight participants.

Both the name of their practice and the new support group incorporate word luna, which means moon in Spanish. That is deliberate, Perez said.

"The moon is a symbol of femininity in many cultures, and we are a female-owned business," Perez said. They want to create something inviting to women, with the goal of taking incremental steps in resolving conflicts and embracing who they are, she said.

"We hope we can at least make a dent in their lives, one little tiny dent that has a positive impact," she said.

---Daily Herald---10/15/2021

Boys soccer: Buch's 2 goals lift Waubonsie Valley over South Elgin

By Bobby Narang, Daily Herald Correspondent

Waubonsie Valley senior Anuj Buch made a big splash on the pitch late in Thursday night's game against **South Elgin**.

Soon after the Warriors' 3-1 comeback win over the Storm, Buch was the recipient of another big splash. After Buch scored 2 goals in less than a 3-minute span late in regulation, he immediately ran over to the main grandstand in an attempt to hear some noise from the smattering of fans.

Buch raised both of his arms in the air in celebration to punctuate his late flurry of goals. A few minutes after the game ended, several teammates grabbed Buch's arms to not let him run away, allowing two teammates to give him a postgame Gatorade shower.

Buch, a captain, made his final home game a memorable experience, sparking the Warriors to a win in their final regular season game.

"I didn't expect that at all from my teammates," Buch said of the Gatorade. "That just goes to show you this team is built on unity, family and being whole as a team. That's great, especially going into the playoffs next week. We have to continue that momentum and energy going into the playoffs. This win will definitely help us."

Buch, who has 6 goals on the season, broke open a 1-1 tie in the 75th minute, stealing a pass and knocking in the eventual game-winner into the far post.

With 2:45 left in regulation, Buch added to his big day with his second goal to put the game out of reach.

The nonconference game started 45 minutes later than scheduled, with the early play reflecting that as both teams looked sluggish in the opening 10 minutes.

In the 11th minute, South Elgin junior forward Ethan Scholl knocked in a shot into the far post for a 1-0 lead. The Storm (6-9-5) had a second-half goal wiped out due to an offside call, which turned out to be a crucial factor in the loss.

The Warriors (6-13-2) were aggressive for most of the game, with South Elgin goalie Luke Biondi collecting 4 saves in the first 17 minutes. The Warriors finally had their breakthrough goal, when Zach Stanley took advantage of a loose ball in the box. Stanley chased down the ball, slightly tapping in the shot before running into the post to tie the game at 1-1 with 11:41 left in the first half. Stanley, a senior, lay motionless for several minutes, his body wrapped around the post before limping off the field.

"I usually like to celebrate after goals, but I couldn't after that goal," Stanley said, smiling.

Up next for the Storm is a Class 3A Elgin regional semifinal game against host Elgin on Tuesday at 5 p.m.

"We're anxiously waiting for the Elgin game, so we experimented with this game by throwing a few guys out of their natural positions," South Elgin coach Jerry Skowron said.

The Warriors picked a good time to end a two-game losing streak, as they head into Tuesday's Class 3A East Aurora regional semifinal against Naperville Central.

"I think we're heading our stride now is important, which is important with playoffs coming up," Waubonsie Valley coach Jose Garcia said. "This win is good for the boys and good for their confidence to build up against Naperville Central."

---Daily Herald---10/15/2021

Boys soccer notes: FVC title on the line Tuesday; Geneva's coming on strong

By Chris Walker, Daily Herald Correspondent