

Press Clippings for 8/16/2022

Daily Herald

Smiles, hugs and a few teary parents welcome school year in U-46 --- 8/16/2022

Daily Herald Report



Evelyn Stearns shares a moment with her mom Elizabeth while lined up for the first day of school at Otter Creek Elementary in Elgin Tuesday. Evelyn is in kindergarten. *Rick West | Staff Photographer*

Smiling kids, teary parents and eager teachers kicked off Otter Creek Elementary School's 20th year Tuesday in Elgin.

More than 35,000 students from kindergarten through 12th grade headed back to classes in Elgin Area School District U-46.

The district serves families in 11 communities including Bartlett, Elgin, Hanover Park, South Elgin, Streamwood and Wayne, as well as portions of Carol Stream, Hoffman Estates, St. Charles, Schaumburg, and West Chicago.

The new school year brings two new middle school principals and six new elementary school principals. The 2022-23 school year also will see the placement of assistant principals in all 40 elementary schools for the first time.

U-46 Rising, which focuses on improving classroom instruction through implementing academic teaming, will expand from five elementary schools to include seven additional elementary schools, one middle school, and one prekindergarten site.

"U-46 team members across the district have spent the summer preparing our buildings, classrooms, curriculum, and resources for the 2022-23 school year," **Superintendent Tony Sanders** said. "We are excited to welcome back our students for another year of learning and growth."

Chicago Tribune/The Courier-News

First day excitement for U-46 students – and new principal at Elgin’s Huff Elementary: ‘My favorite day of the year’--- 8/16/2022

By Mike Danahey



Paula Ek oversaw her first day of classes Tuesday as the new principal of Huff Elementary School in Elgin. (Mike Danahey / The Courier-News)

Tuesday morning, **Paula Ek** felt like many kids do come Christmas morning.

“The first day of school is my favorite day of the year. There’s a joy and happiness about it, along with the excitement of starting a new year,” Ek said.

This year she had one more thing adding to her happiness. Ek is the new principal of **Huff Elementary School** on Elgin’s east side, one of eight new principals hired for the 2022-23 school year by **School District U-46** in addition to about 130 new teachers.



Blessing Doudou, 5, smiles Tuesday in anticipation of heading into Huff Elementary School in Elgin for her first day of kindergarten classes. (Mike Danahey / The Courier-News)

Ek had been working at East Aurora School District 131 since 2014, most recently as executive director of elementary teaching and learning and prior to that as a principal and assistant principal. Before joining District 131, she had been a prekindergarten through 5th grade social studies coordinator for Valley View School District 365U.

“I started my career in education as a teacher with U-46 more than 20 years ago, at **Prairieview** and then **Hawk Hollow** (elementary schools),” she said.

Ek said she was delighted to be back with U-46.

“I love the diversity of the community,” she said.

As for what would be happening on Huff’s first day of classes, Ek said the first order of the day would have teachers and support staff doling out school supplies and basically setting up a structure and routine.



Aliana Cortez, 6, waits outside Huff Elementary School in Elgin Tuesday with her father, Cesar. Both were excited for her to start her first day of first grade. (Mike Danahey / The Courier-News)

With the availability of COVID-19 relief money, the district is providing all school supplies to elementary school students and all school meals at U-46 schools, both free of charge. They're also waiving instructional fees for the school year.

Such decisions had parents like Cesar Cortez happy they didn't have to head out to hunt for bargains on school items during these inflationary times. Cortez said he was also glad the district was offering a dual language program in which his 6-year-old daughter, first-grader Aliana, could participate.

A release from the district said the dual language program will serve about 12,000 students, making it one of the largest efforts of its kind across the United States. In the U-46 program, students learn literacy and academic content in English and Spanish.

Cortez said he opted to start work late so he could bring his daughter to Huff, where they waited in line to meet Aliana's new teacher, **Karyn Baldwin**.

"I like learning," Aliana said when asked what she was looking forward to upon returning to classes.



Students, parents and staff wait to be let inside Huff Elementary School in Elgin Tuesday for the first day of classes in the new 2022-23 school year. (Mike Danahey / The Courier-News)

Nicole and Tango Doudou also delayed heading to work to be with their daughter, Blessing, 5, for her first day of kindergarten.

Wearing pink sunglasses and a bright smile, Blessing said she was hoping she and her classmates would get to play baseball during recess.

After students filed into the building and their respective classrooms, Ek led them in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance and then made her first announcements as principal.

She told the students that schools have “rules and rules and rules” and the one in particular she wanted them to follow was “the rule of all rules: Behave toward friends as we wish friends would treat us,” Ek said.

Chicago Tribune/The Courier-News

Elgin-area parents get a back-to-school break thanks to annual BBQ bash and Haircutapalooza --- 8/16/2022

By Gloria Casas



Lincoln Avenue Barber Shop owner Wil Dumas worked on Jahlil Griffith's hair, shaving the top of his head. The 8-year-old isn't a fan of haircuts but tried to smile/grimace through the experience. (Gloria Casas / The Courier-News)

When 8-year-old Benjamin Howard III heads into the classroom for the start of the 2022-23 school year, he'll be looking next-level cool with his new haircut.

The free trim was courtesy of the 5th annual Back to School BBQ Bash's Haircutapalooza, held Sunday at the Boys & Girls Club of Elgin on Dundee Avenue.

The start of the school year caught Howard's dad by surprise. Benjamin Howard Jr. said he was scrambling to get everything done before his son's first day of class Tuesday at **District U-46's Channing Memorial Elementary School** in Elgin.

A child's haircut can cost anywhere from \$20 to \$30, said Howard Jr., who was grateful for the cost savings provided by the event.



Sam Phonlasouk, of Sauvage Barber Parlor in South Elgin, uses a razor to finish Benjamin Howard III's haircut during Sunday's Haircutpalooza at the Boys & Girls Club of Elgin. (Gloria Casas / The Courier-News)

"This is thousands of dollars of (haircuts) being done here," he said, adding he recognized many of the barbers volunteering their time. "We have a lot of talent here. We have Elgin-raised people giving back to the community."

Elgin City Councilman Corey Dixon founded the Back to School BBQ Bash in 2017, and it's been going strong even through the COVID-19 pandemic, he said. Schoolchildren get backpacks, school supplies and haircuts or hair styling while enjoying barbeque from Duke's Blues-n-BBQ and family entertainment.

"Everything costs more this year," Dixon said. "If you are a family of three, four or five kids, it gets expensive. We're trying to make it easier for families here in the city."

Haircuts were part of previous Back to School BBQ bashes, but the idea grew this year into an event of its own, Haircutapalooza.

Lincoln Avenue Barber Shop owner Wil Dumas worked with Dixon to bring together 45 barbers and hairstylists to provide 120 children with haircuts. Dumas called on friends, colleagues, fellow barber shop owners and the community to hold the marathon event.

A good haircut "gives them that can-do attitude," Dumas said. "You want kids to go to school with the right attitude."



Amelia Garcia volunteered to cut hair Sunday at the 5th Annual Back to School BBQ Bash's Haircutapalooza Sunday at the Boys & Girls Club of Elgin. (Gloria Casas / The Courier-News)

Amelia Garcia, a hairstylist for 15 years, said she's going back to school herself as a first-year teacher this year. She agreed with Dumas about the effect of a good haircut — if the child feels good, it can translate into a successful school year, she said.

Among those who received the benefit of Garcia's skills was 10-year-old Lillian Schumacher, a fifth-grader at the Elgin Math & Science Academy, who sat patiently as Garcia trimmed her curly blond hair. Her favorite part of school is "recess," she said.

Anna Saas, Schumacher's mom, usually cuts her daughter's hair because it's so expensive to go to a salon. It was a treat to have her hair styled professionally, Saas said.

School costs seem to go up every year so "this helps parents. It's like a sigh of relief," she said.

Daily Herald

Master Disasters at Museum Crawl --- 8/16/2022

By Rick West



The 1881 Chicago Street bridge collapse over the Fox River will be one of the catastrophes on display on Aug. 26 during the Elgin Museum Crawl. *Courtesy of the Elgin History Museum*

Four Elgin institutions are working together to plan a catastrophic night -- but in a good way.

The Elgin History Museum, Elgin Public Museum, Fire Barn No. 5 Museum and the **Elgin Area School District U-46 Planetarium** are hosting the first Elgin Museum Crawl featuring a theme of catastrophes on scales from local to global.

Elgin Public Museum Director Sharry Lynn Blazier said she was looking for a theme that all four organizations have in common.

"There's certainly an element of catastrophe in all history," she said. "And it's human nature to be interested in it."

The crawl will be held from 4 to 7 p.m. Friday, Aug. 26, before the city's "End of Summer Bash" fireworks event. All the locations will be free during the crawl. But registration is encouraged, and donations will be accepted.

Attendees will be given a "passport" to be stamped at each location, which can be visited in any order. Once all four are stamped, the passport can be entered into a raffle for a prize basket.

Elizabeth Marston, director of the Elgin History Museum, said organizers came up with the idea after Open Elgin, an annual self-guided architectural tour of 40 to 50 Elgin buildings, was canceled again this year.

"We thought this would be a great opportunity to highlight each of our institutions," Marston said. "Our history is what makes us different from other communities."

Catastrophe highlights from each location include:

- The Palm Sunday tornado of 1920 and Fox River floods -- Elgin History Museum, 360 Park St.
- Earthquakes, extinctions, and the creepy mystery of the murderer's birds -- Elgin Public Museum, 225 Grand Blvd.
- The Rialto Theater fire of the 1950s and other Elgin infernos -- Fire Barn No. 5 Museum, 533 St. Charles St.
- The asteroid that killed the dinosaurs -- **U-46 Planetarium**, 312 Watch St.

Marston said a city of Elgin's size having a planetarium and three museums that are private/public partnerships is unique.

"It gives visitors and residents a real sense of place and pride in the community," she said.

Univision Chicago

Students from District U-46 in Elgin return to school this Tuesday; Use of masks not required --- Aired 8/15/2022

<Note – To view interview with School and Community Relations Director Karla Jimenez, click on link below>

<https://www.univision.com/local/chicago-wgbo/estudiantes-del-distrito-u46-en-elgin-regresan-a-clases-este-martes-no-sera-obligatorio-el-uso-de-mascarilla-video>

Kane County Connects

Back to School for Kane County Kids --- 8/15/2022

Kane County Connects Staff

There are 9 public school districts serving students in Kane County.

Here's a snapshot of each of them:

School District U-46 -- starts on August 16 (Kindergarten thru 12th grade students)

37,000 students - 57 schools and programs. Communities - Bartlett, Elgin, Hanover Park, South Elgin, Streamwood and Wayne and portions of Carol Stream, Hoffman Estates, St. Charles, Schaumburg, and West Chicago.

St Charles School District 303 – started on August 10

11,894 students – 17 schools. Communities – St. Charles, Wayne, West Chicago, South Elgin, Campton Hills, Wasco and Elburn.

District 300 - starts on August 19 19,815 students - 26 schools.

Batavia Public School District 101 – starts on August 16 Nearly 5,300 students - 8 schools.

Geneva School District 304 – starts on August 17

Nearly 5,300 students - 10 schools.

Central School District 301 – started on August 15 (Grades 1 - 12) starts on August 18 (EC & Kindergarten) 4,800 students - 7 schools Communities – Elgin, St. Charles, Campton Hill, Hampshire, Sycamore, Hampshire, Pingree Grove, Maple Park and Burlington.

Kaneland School District – starts on August 17

4,092 students - 6 schools. Communities - Aurora, Cortland, Elburn, Kaneville, Maple Park, Montgomery, North Aurora, Sugar Grove and Virgil.

West Aurora School District – starts on August 17

11,412 students - 18 schools. Communities – Aurora, North Aurora, Montgomery, Sugar Grove, Batavia.

East Aurora School District 131 – starts August 24. 13,561 students - 23 schools.



For more on schools in Kane County go to www.kaneroe.org

Chicago Tribune/The Courier-News Elgin News Digest --- 8/15/2022

By Mike Danahey

First-ever Elgin Museum Crawl to be held Aug. 26

Four institutions will be taking part in the first-ever Elgin Museum Crawl from 3 to 7 p.m. Friday, Aug. 26, just prior to the city's rescheduled Fourth of July fireworks event along the downtown riverfront.

The theme will be catastrophes, and each museum will have exhibits related to large events in the city's history. Supernovas and the asteroid that killed off the dinosaurs will be the focus at the **U-46 Planetarium**, 312 Watch St.; the Rialto Theater fire in the 1950s and other bad city fires featured at Fire Barn No. 5 Museum, 533 St. Charles St.; the 1920 Palm Sunday tornado and various Fox River floods will be discussed at the Elgin History Museum, 360 Park St.; and earthquakes, extinctions and the Mystery of the Murderer's Birds will be covered at the Elgin Public Museum, 225 Grand Blvd. in Lords Park.

The Elgin Museum Crawl is free of charge, although donations will be accepted and divided evenly between the four venues.

To register for the event, email blazier_s@cityofelgin.org or call 847-741-6655.

The Center Square

With COVID mitigations loosened, start of the school year looks different in Illinois --- 8/15/2022

By Kevin Bessler



Caleb Taylor, 5, front, works on his art work during a class at Chalmers Elementary school in Chicago, Wednesday, July 13, 2022.



State Superintendent of Education Dr. Carmen Ayala speaks during a webinar on Monday, Dec. 8, 2020.

(The Center Square) – As many school districts across Illinois welcome back students this month, classrooms will look significantly different than last year, at least in terms of COVID-19 precautions.

With new guidance from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that addresses the need to keep students in classrooms while protecting residents from the virus, the Illinois State Board of Education has adopted federal guidance that eases some restrictions. That includes dropping the quarantine requirement and easing physical distancing.

“This updated guidance from the CDC acknowledges the importance of in-person learning by allowing schools to more aptly adjust to changes within their own communities,” Illinois State Superintendent of Education Carmen Ayala said.

The new CDC guidance notes that although COVID-19 continues to circulate, the risk of severe illness has been reduced due to high levels of vaccinations and infection-induced immunity, along with the widespread availability of effective treatments and prevention tools.

The CDC school guidance continues to recommend universal masking when community levels are high and screening testing for high-risk activities like contact sports.

A controversial new law could affect the school year. Gov. J.B. Pritzker signed into law a bill that gives paid sick leave to all fully vaccinated Illinois school staff who have to take time off for COVID-19-related reasons and provides wage protection for hourly employees who miss school because of closures or e-learning.

Chicago Public Schools announced changes it will make to the district’s handling of the virus this fall. According to Dr. Allison Arwady, commissioner of the Chicago Department of Public Health, and CPS CEO Pedro Martinez, CPS will not require students to be vaccinated against the virus when they return to buildings this fall. However, a vaccination requirement remains in place for staff.

School District U-46 Superintendent Tony Sanders, who heads the second largest district in the state, told ABC7 a sense of normalcy is returning.

“The ability to come back into our schools with students having the option to wear a mask but not the requirement to wear a mask certainly will make schools feel a little more normal than they did in the first couple of years of COVID,” Sanders said.