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Images: Schools take time to honor veterans, recall their service



Ronald D. O'Neal Elementary School 3rd-grader Zenida Rios plants a flag at Veterans Memorial Park in Elgin Friday as part of their Veterans Day commemoration.

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'A veteran leads by example'

Elgin mayor honors WWII vet at Veterans Memorial Park event

BY GLORIA CASAS



Veterans Memorial Park in Elgin includes monuments for U.S. military branches, each of which was recognized Saturday in a Veterans Day ceremony. (Gloria Casas/Courier-News photos)



Veterans Chuck Felski, from left, Jim Montalbano and Scott Webb salute during the ceremony. (Gloria Casas/Courier-News photos)

World War II veteran Joseph Nugara wanted to attend the city of Elgin's Veterans Day ceremony Saturday but was a bit worn out from dancing across the stage at a ceremony earlier in the week, his son said.

Elgin Mayor Dave Kaptain was at that ceremony and praised Nugara's spirit, especially given that Nugara will celebrate his 100th birthday Sunday.

"He got up, got his award and danced across the floor," said Kaptain, keynote speaker at Saturday's Veterans Day ceremony at Veterans Memorial Park on North Grove Avenue. "He enjoyed himself, he enjoys life and that tells me a (lesson) he has given back to all of us: Live your life to the fullest."

Nugara received the Quilt of Valor on Thursday at the Elgin Township TRIAD Day of Honor. In World War II, he fought in Normandy and received three Bronze Star medals for his service. On Saturday, he was awarded a plaque from the city in honor of his service, which his son accepted.

"My father takes his hat off to all those he served with and those who did not make it back. God bless you all," Joseph Nugara Jr. said.

Veterans like Nugara not only gave part of their lives up to serve in the military, but they also continue to teach important lessons throughout their lives and help guide younger generations, the mayor said.

"A veteran is a leader. A veteran leads by example," Kaptain said. A veteran leads by speaking his or her mind and fighting for what is right, he said.

Elgin's Veterans Day ceremony also included performances by the **Elgin High School** band under the direction of Robert Sanchez, a rifle salute by the American Legion Elgin Post 57, a combined veterans color guard, and tributes to each branch of service.

Ronald D. O'Neal Elementary School students from Ani Smith's class donated mini flags that lined the park; audience members were invited to take flags home. Master of ceremonies Tricia Dieringer said

veterans should know the students care about them and that the day has special meaning to a younger generation.

The city has a long history of honoring veterans, Kaptain said. This summer, the city unveiled a Civil War memorial honoring Gen. William Lynch, one of the first volunteers who fought in the Civil War. Lynch was wounded several times, became a prisoner of war and served again until he was injured, Kaptain said. He later was elected to the local school board and city council, he said.

Lynch mentored and helped others, like many veterans do every day, Kaptain said. As America continues to send young men and women into the armed forces, the country needs to recognize their sacrifice and stand up for the ideals they are fighting for, he said.

"It is our obligation to make certain when these young men and women serve, they are called to a cause worth the risk," Kaptain said. "The lives of these young men and women are too precious to waste."

Gloria Casas is a freelance reporter.

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U46 may ease record deadline
BY RAFAEL GUERRERO

School District U46's stricter-than-the-state's date by which health records must be submitted for students to start school may be changed to help parents.

The district requires up-to-date records of physicals and immunizations on the first day of school, which was Aug. 16. The state recommends the date be Oct. 15, and U46 board members might push the deadline to that or earlier in October.

"No matter what we do, we are going to have students in school that will not be fully immunized because of the issues that we have with exemptions, religious restrictions, insurance," among others, said board member Melissa Owens.

Without the record, students are prohibited from attending until they come back fully vaccinated unless they're exempt for religious or medical reasons.

Board member Jeanette Ward wants the date to be Oct. 15, although she also has issues with the state's vaccination mandate. She believe parents should decide whether to vaccinate their children.

"I accept that it's a state law, I don't like it, but if we mirror what the state is, that allows at least that additional time for parents," she said.

Colleague Veronica Noland said she has always struggled with the district's policy, which hits students and parents along with other hurdles as the school years starts.

Board members were open to changing the date, but not pushing it into October. A few floated the idea of having it be about a week into the school year.

Board president Donna Smith stood by the original date, noting it allowed for the least interference of a student's instruction.

"I think losing two days in August is probably better academically than losing two days in October," added board member Sue Kerr, although she, too, is willing to push the deadline back a week.

No action was taken Nov. 6, even after the board heard that 711 notifications were sent to parents and guardians over their students' records being out of date this school year. In the week following Aug. 16, 178 students were not in attendance due to non-compliance, according to district officials.

More than half of the exclusions were in sixth grade, with those students missing about two days of school on average, district data showed.

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Elgin students brave cold to walk, rally for veterans

BY RAFAEL GUERRERO



Students from O'Neal Elementary School in Elgin leave Veterans Memorial Park on Friday, after walking from the school, carrying and waving flags along the way, in honor of Veterans Day. (Rafael Guerrero / Courier-News)

Winter-like cold didn't stop dozens of students from walking about a mile Friday in honor of military veterans.

"It's a small sacrifice compared to the larger one (veterans) have made for us," said fourth-grade teacher Ani Smith, one of the walk's organizers.

As part of O'Neal Elementary School's Veterans Day festivities, more than a dozen classrooms of 3-6 graders walked from the school to Gail Borden Public Library and the neighboring Veterans Memorial Park. It was the first time the school had attempted such a "parade" and rally to recognize veterans.

Principal Marcie Marzullo said the walk mattered to the school, as not only it meant something for veterans but also for the community; along the way, many students passed by their homes. Some neighbors looked out at the crowd of children and adults walking past their homes, she said.

"We just wanted try something a little different, to have the kids show their appreciation," said Marzullo. "We got (miniature) flags to plant them (at the site) because they're going to be having a ceremony. A lot of the kids made cards, we'll be giving them to the American Legion.



Elgin History Museum staff introduce intern Nayeli Benitez, a U.S. Navy veteran, during a presentation honoring military veterans and Veterans Day at Elgin's Veterans Memorial Park on Friday. (Rafael Guerrero / Courier-News)

Bundled up in coats and warmer clothing, the students gathered at the memorial, where members of the Elgin History Museum gave the children a brief history lesson on World War I. Sarah Russell, the museum's lead educator, led the hands-on presentation, which included classes forming sides representative of the conflict; Veterans Day falls on Nov. 11, the day when the Armistice with Germany took place in 1918, marking the end of World War I.

It also included appearances from two veterans, including Elgin History Museum intern Nayeli Benitez, a recent U.S. Navy veteran who served six years. Their introductions produced the largest cheers and applause of the short presentation.

The children then placed the miniature U.S. flags on a small hill next to the memorial, in anticipation of Saturday's larger ceremony.

Several **School District U46** schools honored military veterans ahead of Veterans Day, alongside other local districts. According to a district news release, they included assemblies, writing cards to active service members, fundraisers and visits from veterans.

"We really wanted the veterans to know we're teaching our kids to respect the flag, respect our veterans," Smith said about the school, which has about 550 students.



Elgin History Museum lead educator Sarah Russell helps a student during a brief presentation on World War I at Veterans Memorial Park, just outside Gail Borden Public Library. (Rafael Guerrero / Courier-News)

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Cops: Report of threat at South Elgin school false

BY STAFF REPORT

A rumor going around South Elgin High School on Friday about a student with a weapon came from a report police had already deemed false, said South Elgin police Sgt. Mike Doty.

Three days ago, Doty said, the department and School District U46 officials conducted an investigation into an allegation that a student had brought a weapon into the school at 760 E. Main S.

“The juvenile student had been previously identified and a thorough investigation to include a threat assessment was conducted,” Doty said in a news release. No weapon was found, officials said.

On Friday, however, “partial and incomplete information regarding that allegation made its way into the student population. As a result, that rumor made its way through the school and to parents causing some concern to students. The school and police department are confident that there is nothing to substantiate a credible threat,” Doty said.

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Fox Valley honors vets

BY DAILY HERALD REPORT



The Elgin High School band played patriotic songs as part of Veterans Day ceremonies at Veterans Memorial Park in Elgin. **James Kane | Staff Photographer**

More than 100 people attended a ceremony Saturday morning at Veterans Memorial Park in Elgin to honor the sacrifices veterans have made for their country.

The solemn Veterans Day ceremony included speeches, a color guard, patriotic songs performed by the Elgin High School band and a rifle salute.

In West Dundee, the fourth annual Stand for Vets event was held at St. Catherine of Siena Church.

From 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, people could stand together or sit on the grassy area in front of the church along Route 72. Volunteers brought their own American flags from home to display.

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U-46 to hold dual language academy for parents again

BY MADHU KRISHNAMURTHY

Elgin Area School District U-46 hosts its second annual Dual Language Academy for parents of preschoolers through eighth-graders Nov. 18.

The event is organized by the English Language Learners Department in partnership with Gail Borden Public Library. It aims to inform and empower the dual language community to better prepare students for bilingualism and biliteracy.

It will run 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at Elgin High School, 1200 Maroon Drive.

Kim Potowski, an author and professor of Hispanic linguistics at the University of Illinois at Chicago, will give the keynote address.

Parents can choose from a dozen sessions, including a day in a dual language classroom, how to support Eureka Math at home, understanding assessments, and various ways to aid students academically and linguistically.

Breakout sessions will be offered in English and Spanish. Food and entertainment will be provided. Registration is not required.

Research shows Spanish is the most spoken non-English language in the United States. In 2015, the nonprofit Instituto Cervantes reported there are more Spanish speakers in America -- 41 million native speakers plus 11.6 million bilingual residents -- than in Spain.

More than 53 percent of U-46's 39,377 students are Hispanic, according to the 2017 Illinois School Report Card.

The district offers dual language classes in 33 schools educating more than 10,000 students in prekindergarten through eighth grades to become bilingual and biliterate. The program will be expanding into high schools in the 2018-19 school year.

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U-46 looks to save on utilities, might hire energy consultant

BY MADHU KRISHNAMURTHY

Elgin schools' officials are considering contracting with an energy conservation company to save on utility costs.

Elgin Area School District U-46 spends nearly \$5 million yearly on natural gas, electricity and water. The proposed five-year contract with Cenergistic is expected to result in more than \$4.4 million in savings over the contract term.

Cenergistic delivers customized, comprehensive energy conservation programs focusing on changing human behavior to reduce energy and water consumption without equipment upgrades. It serves roughly 1,400 clients in 48 states, including school districts, large churches, community colleges, universities, hospitals, and local governments. On average, clients saved 26 percent on utility costs, documents show.

"This is basically an efficiency type of contract," U-46 Chief Operations Officer Jeff King told the school board this week. "They are supplying the expertise."

U-46 would pay \$59,988 for Cenergistic's energy accounting software, which is the only expense. The company would provide three employees to monitor the district's 53 campus buildings nightly for usage.

"They are looking at all of our buildings," King said. "All the other energy companies are equipment based. I have not seen any others that offer a similar program. We will update the board as to how we progress."

Last year, the district budgeted \$3.2 million for electricity costs, and \$1.8 million for natural gas, though no amount was specified for water usage.

If Cenergistic does not generate savings, it won't get paid, officials said. The contract proposal will be voted on at a future board meeting.

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