

Press Clippings 1/12/2018

---Courier News--- 1/12/18

School officials upset with Rauner's action

Governor says his amendatory veto was to address technical concerns over a school funding bill

BY RAFAEL GUERRERO



Teacher Kristi Schooler works with second-grade students Dahlia Yglecias, from left, Taurean Kennedy and Deangelo Cain Jr. at Hillcrest Elementary School in Elgin. (Rafael Guerrero/Courier-News)

Elgin-area public school leaders called Gov. Bruce Rauner's amendatory veto of a bill that would change how schools get funded by the state "disappointing."

The passage of the bill last year was seen by legislators and school administrators as a victory in narrowing the funding gap between more affluent and less affluent schools. The veto leaves local educators uncertain over when the additional state dollars could get disbursed.

"It's disappointing. It's very disappointing," School District U46 CEO Tony Sanders said Thursday. "Everyone agreed to these changes (last year). I don't see the need to delay the distribution of funds for any reason."

Rauner said his amendatory veto was to address technical concerns regarding the Invest in Kids scholarship program attached to the legislation. As it was written, Rauner said, as many as three-dozen private schools could be excluded from the scholarship program.

The program in question would create a scholarship pool as large as \$100 million, funded with money donated by individuals and corporations in exchange for a 75 percent tax credit for their contribution.

"The students attending or looking to attend these schools deserve the same access to Invest in Kids scholarships as those in already recognized schools," Rauner said in a written statement Monday. "Their educational opportunities cannot wait for years."

The governor's actions prompted statewide responses from legislators. State Sen. Andy Manar, D-Bunker Hill, the bill's sponsor, said the action would cause "absolute chaos."

Shortly after Monday's announcement, Sanders went on social media to voice his disapproval of the governor's action. On Thursday, Sanders asked why the move was not done via a trailer bill since it is likely other additions will be made that way this year.

The Illinois State Board of Education estimated last year that U46 could receive an additional \$12 million to \$13 million from the state in the first year under the new funding formula.

The veto requires the General Assembly to approve or override the governor's change or not do anything. A delay in the disbursement of new state dollars has no immediate impact on U46, Sanders said, but it may in the long term.

Additional state aid could be used in a number of ways, such as the maintenance of buildings, reducing class sizes or undoing program cuts from last decade, he said. Funding for maintenance projects will be tight as this school year marked the end of using bond money to do building repairs, he said.

Hillcrest Elementary School Principal Teresa Winters said additional revenue could be used for technology, boosting parental engagement and even funding playground equipment, if need be.

Hillcrest is at a disadvantage, with more than 85 percent of its families being low-income, Winters said. Equity among all schools would allow poorer schools like Hillcrest to be competitive with neighboring school districts that are more affluent and can afford programs and initiatives that U46 cannot, she said.

"We're not giving students a fair chance because education is not equitable," Winters said.

Officials in neighboring School District 300, based in Algonquin, also expressed disappointment in the governor's action. Superintendent Fred Heid issued a written statement saying the delay will likely keep District 300 officials from making "sound financial decisions" on program and staffing needs for two or three months.

"We hope to receive an update to allay our concerns because an additional 60- to 90-day delay does not provide District 300 with adequate time to calculate our budget as accurately as possible to ensure we make the most fiscally responsible decisions for our community," Heid said.

In St. Charles School District 303, spokeswoman Carol Smith said officials did not anticipate significant issues to cash flow or operations resulting from the governor's veto.

Rachel Bold, a spokeswoman for the governor, said Thursday it is "unfair" for critics of the veto to say implementation and money getting to schools will be delayed. The Illinois State Board of Education continues to work on the funding formula. "Tier funding is still several months from being sent out," she said in an email response.

---Courier News--- 1/12/18

School officials upset with Rauner's action U46 board member, assistant superintendent up for city MLK award

BY RAFAEL GUERRERO

A School District U46 board member and an administrator are nominees for Elgin's 2018 Martin Luther King Jr. Humanitarian Award, the district announced this week.

Board member Traci O'Neal Ellis and Ronald Raglin, assistant superintendent of educational support programs and alignment, are up for the award to be handed out at Saturday's Elgin Prayer Breakfast.

O'Neal Ellis, a U46 graduate in her second term on the school board, is an attorney and the human resources executive director at the Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy in Aurora. Raglin oversees the district's Advancement Via Individual Determination college readiness system, a yearlong equity professional development training and mentoring calibration initiative system. Raglin is also the district's liaison with the Alignment Collaborative for Education and the African-American Advisory Council, among others.

In a news release, Danise Habun, chair of the 2018 Dr. King Celebration Committee and a member of the Elgin Human Relations Commission, said the award is given to "individuals with a lifework that reflects the legacy and teachings of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr."

The Elgin Prayer Breakfast is at 8:30 a.m. Saturday at the Hemmens Cultural Center, 45 Symphony Way. Illinois Secretary of State Jesse White will be the keynote speaker at the event organized by the city's Human Relations Commission.

In addition, four U46 students will be awarded scholarships at the MLK Day of Service & Youth Leadership Conference at 9 a.m. Monday at the Heritage Ballroom at the Centre of Elgin. Kenyon Woods Middle School Assistant Principal Edward Amos will serve as the keynote speaker.

The students are Larkin High School students Aris Johnson, Julia Escamilla, Emily Renteria and Sky Aranda. Johnson will receive a \$1,200 scholarship; Escamilla will receive an \$800 scholarship; and Renteria and Aranda both will receive \$250 scholarships.

---Courier News--- 1/12/18

Elgin Development Group touts 2017 accomplishments

BY MIKE DANAHEY

Elgin Development Group representatives touted the organization's 2017 accomplishments on Wednesday, citing success in bringing a dozen companies to the city last year.

The group met or exceeded the guidelines it has in its contract, Elgin Area Chamber of Commerce Chairman-elect Mike Warren told the Elgin City Council during a presentation Wednesday night.

On the scorecard are items such as retaining and drawing businesses to the city, Warren noted. Warren served on the City Council from 2009 to 2011 and is employed as a workspace culture consultant at Rieke Office Interiors.

The development group is an arm of the chamber and is in the second year of a three-year contract for \$275,000 a year to provide the city with economic development work. Warren said that, at the request of City Manager Rick Kozal, the group would be holding quarterly conversations at Elgin City Council meetings.

Tony Lucenko, economic development director for the organization, told the City Council there are 5,600 businesses in Elgin and about half are service-related. The biggest employer is the J.P. Morgan Chase operations center on the west side, and the city has a good amount of advanced manufacturing operations involved in industries such as plastics and packaging, he said.

"Elgin's economy is diverse and not over-reliant on any one sector," Lucenko said.

Lucenko mentioned three businesses in which the group played a role in getting to locate in Elgin: Vancouver-based SureWerx, a supplier of tools, safety products and services; Kabat American, which specializes in replacement parts for farm equipment; and St. Charles Trading, a global supplier of food ingredients. The latter two will be opening their Elgin operations in 2018, according to Lucenko.

"In the last two years, we've assisted 25 companies who either expanded here or located in Elgin," Lucenko said.

Lucenko said the group works with the International Council of Shopping Centers to try to bring retailers to Elgin. The city has had losses, too, Lucenko said. Of the work itself, "it's not a lot of fancy stuff," he said.

Elgin Development Group Director Bob Malm told the City Council that Elgin's unemployment rate has been under 5 percent since May and the lowest it's been in 10 years.

Malm oversees the group's workforce development efforts, which include having a committee made up of representatives from the business community, **School District U46** and Elgin Community College.

City Council member Terry Gavin noted his involvement with the development group and praised its professionalism. Of great interest, Gavin said, is tackling the challenge of preparing the workforce for the jobs that exist and will exist in the market.

City Council member Rose Martinez noted that the group has always been approachable, and chamber President and CEO Carol Gieske informed her that the development group has 100 volunteers from the business community “who believe in Elgin.”

Gieske said the chamber also provides value to institutions in Elgin’s backyard, including offering office space for consultation sessions by Northern Illinois University’s EIGERlab’s Center for Product Development.

City Council member Rich Dunne noted the chamber and the development group are picking up slack left by the closing of the Small Business Center at ECC. Gieske mentioned the chamber soon will be offering another session of its Small Business Academy for entrepreneurs looking to start their own companies and which takes a realistic approach.

“We say just because you like cookies, it doesn’t mean you should open a bakery,” Gieske said.

“I might have to steal that line,” Dunne quipped.

---Courier News--- 1/12/18

U46 schools set to start Aug. 15

Two-week winter break will run from Dec. 24 to Jan. 4

BY RAFAEL GUERRERO

The 2018-19 calendar for Elgin-area School District U46 has been set, and students again will have an early back-to-school start date.

The first day of classes will be Aug. 15, the third Wednesday of the month — the same day on which the 2017-18 session opened.

Thanksgiving break will again be three days, followed by a two-week winter break running from Dec. 24 to Jan. 4, 2019.

The positioning allows for the first semester of the school year to end before students and staff depart in December.

Spring break will start March 25, 2019, and run the entire week, according to the calendar.

Classes will end May 22, 2019, if no emergency days are used. This end date mirrors what’s in place for this year, when the last day of school lands before Memorial Day.

Unlike last year, the vote on the calendar was not divisive or heated.

Last winter, a majority of school board members voted in favor of a calendar option that was not the top pick among U46 parents and guardians, who preferred a late-August start date and pushing first-semester finals to a date following winter break.

The board was divided, and the early start schedule was approved with a 4-3 vote.

There was no survey this year, which drew the scrutiny of Jeanette Ward. She voted against the 2017-18 calendar last January and the 2018-19 calendar last month. In both cases, she supported the later starting date.

“I want affirmation that we will be surveying our parents next year,” board member Phil Costello said during the Dec. 18 board meeting.

Costello voted in favor of the 2018-19 school year but urged administrators to get parents’ opinions again.

The district’s calendar closely mirrors that of neighboring School District 300 in Algonquin, where the first day of classes in 2018 will be Aug. 14. St. Charles School District 303 and School District 301 in Burlington have scheduled Aug. 22 start dates.

---Daily Herald--- 1/12/18

Martin Luther King Jr. honored at area events

DAILY HERALD REPORT

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination. Communities throughout the Fox Valley area are pulling together to hold celebrations of his life and to honor his legacy -- with a special focus on community service.

Elgin

- The 33rd annual Elgin Martin Luther King Jr. Prayer Breakfast, with the theme "Creating the Beloved Community: The beloved Community is the Framework of the Future," will begin at 8:30 a.m. Saturday, Jan. 13, at Hemmens Cultural Center, 45 Symphony Way. It will feature Secretary of State Jesse White as keynote speaker. Tickets, \$15, are available at city hall, 150 Dexter Court. For information, call (847) 931-6001 or visit www.cityofelgin.org/mlk.
- The seventh annual MLK Day of Service and Youth Leadership Conference will be 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Monday, Jan. 15, at The Centre of Elgin, 100 Symphony Way. This free event helps Elgin to unite with the rest of the country in bringing people from all walks of life together to make a difference in their communities. People of all ages are invited to participate. Individuals or groups may register at www.cityofelgin.org/mlk. A number of U-46 schools and staff in the Educational Services Center are also participating in the seventh annual Dr. King Food Drive through Jan. 15. Participating drop-off locations can be found at cityofelgin.org/mlk. In the past six years, more than 65,000 pounds of food has been collected, making it one of the most successful food drives in the Fox Valley area. Food will be distributed Jan. 15 to eight local food pantries.

Three U-46 middle schools –Abbott, Canton and Kimball (AVID National Demonstration Site) – are hosting Socratic seminar sessions and/or Philosophical chairs this month during which students will discuss how to apply Dr. King’s values and vision to contemporary social and political issues. A Socratic seminar is a collaborative, intellectual dialogue facilitated with open-ended questions about a text and/or topic. Philosophical chairs are similar to debates. Student participants will be asked to discuss how humans resolve conflict throughout their lives. Anyone interested in attending a seminar should contact Ron Raglin at RonaldRaglin@u-46.org.

---Daily Herald--- 1/12/18

Elgin's Sitter named new AD at Hampshire

BY JERRY FITZPATRICK



Elgin High boys basketball coach Mike Sitter, right, has been named the new athletic director at Hampshire High School effective July 1. John Starks | Staff Photographer

Leaving Elgin High to become the next athletic director at Hampshire was a matter of perfect timing for Maroons' boys basketball coach Mike Sitter.

Sitter, 47, was hired Tuesday by Algonquin-based Community Unit District 300 to replace retiring Hampshire athletic director Dave Hicks effective July 1.

Sitter said he intended to step away from coaching after the 2017-18 season regardless because the youngest of his two sons, Jackson, will graduate in May and two longtime assistants are stepping down after this season. Then Hicks announced his retirement.

"I just think it came at the perfect time," Sitter said. "It was like the perfect storm. I was done this year no matter what with coaching. It just felt like a good time to leave, so I wanted to go the administrative route. I wanted to be an AD and I've been talking about that for awhile with my family and some mentors. The job came about and it was just a great fit."

Sitter is an Elgin High graduate who went on to earn a bachelor's degree from Eastern Illinois and a Master's in Leadership from Aurora University. He spent three years as a teacher and coach at Round Lake before returning to Elgin 17 years ago.

He took over as head coach of the Maroons on an interim basis shortly before the 2007-08 season and guided them to a 22-10 record, capped by a sectional title.

Sitter was named Elgin's head coach permanently in April of 2008. In 11 seasons he owns a record of 154-142 and his teams have won three regional titles, most recently in 2012. Elgin is 4-10 this season.

"I do think I've stabilized that basketball program a little and I think I'm going to leave it in good hands, hopefully," he said. "There are some prospective coaches out there who are willing to step up and take the challenge of keeping Elgin going in a good direction. I think it will be all right."

When Sitter was named Elgin's head coach in 2008, he called it his "dream job" and said "I'll be at Elgin until they drag my rotting corpse from the building." Thus, leaving his alma mater for an administrative opportunity will be bittersweet.

"It's tough leaving the school," he said. "My mother (Susan) taught here for 34 years so it will be the first time a Sitter hasn't been in the building since the mid-seventies. That will be kind of tough.

"But it's an opportunity for me. It's exciting. The facilities at Hampshire are top notch. There's a lot of potential growth out there. I think I'm a young guy still. I feel young. I know I don't have administrative experience, but I also have a lot of energy and I think I can bring some good things to that program."

Sitter already knows Hampshire principal Brett Bending. The two worked together as coaches for one year at Round Lake 20 years ago. He also knows Hicks a bit because their sons played for the same travel baseball team a few summers ago.

"I've been watching what he's been doing at Elgin High and he's done a great job," Hicks said of Sitter. "When we had the interviews it's obvious that he's passionate about going in a different direction and coming here, so I feel pretty happy turning over everything to Mike and look forward to the transition."

Madhu Krishnamurthy contributed to this report.

---Daily Herald--- 1/12/18

Elgin-Larkin alumni game features many top players from the past

BY JERRY FITZPATRICK



Brandon Grissette, a former Elgin High standout, is the organizer of next Wednesday's Elgin-Larkin alumni games at Elgin's Chesbrough Field House. John Starks | Staff Photographer

The idea for next Wednesday's Elgin vs. Larkin alumni basketball event was hatched of one former Elgin player's desire to teach his son about the city's rich basketball history.

Brandon Grissette was an all-area player for the Maroons who graduated in 2007. He has been working on the idea for an alumni game to benefit charity for over two years, largely, he said, to teach his 7-year-old son Christopher Williams about the players who came before.

"That's one of the biggest factors of me doing it, for my son," Grissette said. "He's playing ball and stuff and he's really big into the Elgin High program. I feel the youth need to see some of their history as far as the guys that paved the way for them now. I just want him to experience this and see some of the guys that he wouldn't have a clue about but were my idols when I was growing up."

Grissette is in his first year as an Elgin High dean's assistant and in his second season as an assistant sophomore basketball coach. He was able to persuade Elgin to host the event at Chesbrough Field House on Jan. 17 with proceeds going to the Elgin Boys and Girls Club, where Grissette also works as basketball coach and physical trainer.

There are two men's games with 20-minute halves scheduled -- New School at 7 p.m.; Old School at 8 p.m. -- featuring prominent players in each program's history. The games will be preceded by performances from the EHS drum line and dance team and the Divine Divas Dance Group.

The format will be kept lighthearted throughout by DJ Ace Boogie, who Grissette has seen host pro-ams in Chicago. He'll serve as host via a wireless microphone, allowing him to comment on the action, speak to players and entertain the crowd.

Rosters for the Old School game are highlighted by Elgin Sports Hall Of Fame members on each side.

Sherick Simpson, a 1993 Larkin graduate, was inducted to the ESHOF in 2015. He won an NCAA Division II national championship at Fort Hayes State in 1996 as the team's leading scorer and went on to play professionally for 10 years in Holland and Portugal and various leagues in the United States. He was also recently announced as a 2018 inductee to the Illinois Basketball Coaches Association Hall of Fame.

Heading the Elgin roster is 2017 ESHOF inductee Jessie Henderson, who was inducted to the IBCA Hall of Fame in 2016. A 1990 Elgin graduate, Henderson was the leading scorer for the 1990 Elite Eight team and graduated as the school's fifth-leading scorer with 1,111 points.

That's just the tip of the iceberg. The Larkin Old School roster includes 2006 Daily Herald All-Area Team honorary captain Dayvon Ellis, current Streamwood coach Paul Kowalyszyn, David Binion, Billy Lewis, Nick Edwards, current Larkin girls basketball coach Steve Knapp, Dwan Williams and Jimmy Brown.

The Elgin Old School roster includes Jamaal Clark, Javelle Cooks, Quentin Howard, Chamar Sallis, Chandon Hare, Donnel Sallis, Wallace Lynch and Grissette.

Rosters for the New School game feature more familiar names. The Elgin lineup includes 2013 Daily Herald All-Area Team honorary captain Arie Williams, 2012 Daily Herald male athlete of the year Dennis Moore, who went on to play running back for Division III national champion Wisconsin-Whitewater, and Jeremy Granger, who played at Eastern Illinois and professionally in Europe.

Also taking part for Elgin are 2008 sectional champion center D'Angelo Stewart, Isaiah Butler, Desmond Douglas, Xavier Granger, Larry Berry, Donte Harper and Goose Herrera.

The Larkin side features 3-point aces Ryan Smith and Quentin Ruff, Charles Sanders, Brandon Cooks, JD Darke, Malik Marshall, Keith Smith, Daniel McFadden and Brent Cooks.

Doors open at 6 p.m. for the event. Tickets are \$5 for adults, \$3 for high school and middle school students with ID and free for children under 12.

Grissette, who is also considering organizing an Elgin vs. Larkin flag football game, thinks next Wednesday's atmosphere will be just what the area needs during the January doldrums.

"From the community standpoint I feel like it brings the excitement level up," Grissette said. "Anytime you mention Elgin-Larkin it's exciting."