

Press Clippings 4/27/2018

---Courier News--- 4/27/18

Larkin senior to serve as next student adviser to U46 board

Panel says Teeter has ‘deep passion for social justice

BY RAFAEL GUERRERO



School District U46 board members meet Monday with the two finalists for the student adviser position. The board approved Larkin High School student Jackson Teeter, seated near the green pole, for the role. (Rafael Guerrero/Courier-News)

Larkin High School student Jackson Teeter will be the next student adviser to the School District U46 board.

Teeter, who will be a senior next school year, was approved by U46 board members Monday to replace Casey Pearce, a Bartlett High School student set to graduate next month. The student adviser is a nonvoting member of the board who reports on issues occurring at the schools and may give opinions on agenda items.

Teeter has been a U46 student since the fourth grade. Members of the CEO Student Advisory Council, which recommended Teeter for the position, described him as someone with a “deep passion for social justice, the power of education and the right to express one’s voice politically.” Eight students completed applications to be considered for the post.

“I’m excited to be joining you,” Teeter said at Monday night’s board meeting. “I like to have my voice heard, and I like to have everyone’s voice be heard.”

He is the 10th student adviser in the district’s history; fellow Larkin student Isabella Cwik was selected as the alternate adviser should Teeter not be able to serve. U46, based in Elgin, is one of a few districts statewide that allows a student representative to serve on the school board. Other local districts with student board members include Naperville School District 203 and East Aurora School District 131.

“It is an honor to be sitting here before the board,” CEO Tony Sanders told Teeter and Cwik. “We have 12,000 high school students, 3,000 of whom are juniors. To be sitting here as two students among 3,000 that could have possibly been sitting here is, statistically, quite significant.”

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HBO show featuring Elgin to air

Police department's ROPE program detailed in episode

BY JANELLE WALKER

Since producers and a crew from HBO were in Elgin in December to talk about the Resident Officer Program of Elgin, the city has seen its first police-involved fatal shooting in nearly 20 years.

According to those interviewed for Wyatt Cenac's "Problem Areas" on the premium network, the March 12 shooting death of Decynthia Clements by Elgin police Sgt. Chris Jensen likely will be mentioned in the broadcast at 10:30 p.m. Friday.

"Problem Areas" debuted on the cable channel April 13. The series, now two episodes in, starts with Cenac's take on two random topics before Cenac delves into the show's overall focus — policing in the U.S. — and how police relate to residents of color in their communities.

The policing aspect encompasses about 20 minutes of the half-hour program.

In Elgin, the producers focused on the city's ROPE program. Started in the mid-1990s by former police Chief Charles Gruber, the program puts officers in city-owned housing in high-crime neighborhoods.

While here, Cenac interviewed Chief Jeff Swoboda, ROPE Officer Heather Farrell, former **Elgin School District U46** board member Traci O'Neal Ellis and activist Marcus Banner. Sgt. Eric Echevarria also shows up on screen.

While interviewers focused on ROPE while here, the producers did reach out again to Swoboda and others following the Clements shooting.

Some of the follow-up was basic fact-checking, O'Neal-Ellis said.

"Do you still live in Elgin, did you say this, are you still a member of the U46 board — which was true when they fact-checked," O'Neal-Ellis said of the follow-up questions. She resigned her school board seat Monday night to focus on a new volunteer opportunity with national implications, she said.

O'Neal-Ellis noted that while a lot has happened in the city since HBO crews were here, the city and how it polices all residents hasn't changed.

"It is still the same Elgin. In both the positive and negative ways, it still is. This police shooting, this is not a regular occurrence in Elgin, and I do not take that as being representative of the Elgin Police Department as a whole," she said.

"But all of the things that were going on — Elgin continues to have issues for the black community. It is still the same Elgin, good and bad."

Banner, a self-described former gang member who works in construction and trains boxers at area gyms, agreed.

Overall, Banner said, he believes the community policing model in Elgin is a good thing.

“But it can be bad if it is not the right officer with the right heart for the job,” Banner said this week.

He first met Swoboda when he was an officer and Banner was a younger man, said Banner, 40.

“Years later, I still have a positive image of (Swoboda), regardless of what is going on with other police officers” in Elgin, he said.

What he sees, however, is that while the Elgin Police Department is good at engaging with those who want to get involved, it does need to do more to reach those who feel they are not a part of the community, he said.

For people who feel that they are outcasts because of race or socioeconomic status, the Clements shooting felt like business as usual for police, Banner said.

“To them, nothing was different anyway — this was bound to happen for them, in that world,” he said.

Figuring out how to better connect with those communities is one of the things that the Police Department will be working on, Swoboda said.

Swoboda said he hopes the HBO series continues to focus on ROPE and how that program has worked for the city.

In the teaser trailer at the end of the previous episode, Cenac asks Swoboda whether the ROPE model should be used in all communities. Swoboda says “no.”

Comically, Cenac gets up and walks away.

A longer trailer is now available on HBO’s YouTube channel. In that trailer, Cenac notes that the Neighborhood Officer Program of Elgin — or NOPE — does not have a great acronym. Swoboda says that is why it’s usually called just Neighborhood Officer.

If the show focuses on ROPE and other programs that put officers into the community, it will be positive, Swoboda said.

Swoboda said he saw the first episode, which focuses on Falcon Heights, Minn. That community turned its policing over to the Ramsey County sheriff’s office following the July 2016 shooting death of Philando Castile by one of its officers.

The Ramsey County sheriff said it looks to hire police officers with good character.

That, Swoboda said, is similar to how the Elgin Police Department looks for officers. He has said at several events that the department looks to hire people with a community mindset, then will train them on how to be police officers.

“They just call it something else,” Swoboda said of the Ramsey County model.

“You can’t be a good police officer unless you are a good person — you have to have service in your heart versus ‘I want to arrest people and enforce laws,’” Swoboda said.

---Daily Herald--- 4/27/18

U-46 seeking candidate to fill school board vacancy

BY MADHU KRISHNAMURTHY

Elgin Area School District U-46 is accepting applications to fill a vacancy on the school board after Traci O'Neal Ellis' resignation this week.

The selected candidate will serve out the remainder of Ellis' term until the school board election next April.

Interested candidates must meet state law requirements to serve as a board member: be a U.S. citizen 18 years or older, a resident of the Illinois and living within the boundaries of U-46 for at least one year preceding selection, be a registered voter in the district, and file a Statement of Economic Interest form with the Kane County Clerk's Office.

Candidates can send a one-page letter of interest and resume to Miguel Rodriguez, Secretary to the Board of Education, 355 E. Chicago St., Elgin, Illinois 60120 or by email to miguelrodriguez@u-46.org. Deadline for applications is 5 p.m. May 9. For questions, email Board@u-46.org.

U-46 employees and current public office holders conflicting with the role of a school board member are ineligible to apply. Child sex offenders also are prohibited from serving on a school board. The position does not include compensation.

---Daily Herald--- 4/27/18

U46 awards \$30,000 in scholarships

BY MADHU KRISHNAMURTHY

Elgin Area School District U-46 officials awarded \$30,000 in student scholarships Wednesday during the seventh annual Superintendent's Scholarship reception at Elgin High School.

Scholarships were granted to 30 class of 2018 seniors from all five district high schools and students enrolled in the DREAM Academy alternative educational program. Recipients are the first in their families to attend college.

"All 30 students believe in the American dream," U-46 CEO Tony Sanders said. "All of these students, and their families, are striving for a better life, a life promised through higher education. We are so proud of these outstanding students and excited for their futures. We are also very appreciative of the generous members of the U-46 community who have donated toward this scholarship fund."

Former U-46 superintendent José Torres established the scholarship fund in 2012 through the U-46 Educational Foundation. Since then, more than 180 graduates, including this year's recipients, have received a \$1,000 scholarship.

More than 80 eligible seniors submitted applications, including their high school transcript, a copy of their federal student aid application, a letter of recommendation from an adult and a personal essay.

A panel of judges selected recipients from a variety of backgrounds, including several immigrants or children of immigrants. They will be pursuing degree programs at various institutions, including Princeton University in New Jersey, Augustana College in Rock Island, the University of Illinois at Chicago, Southern Illinois University and Syracuse University in New York.

On Wednesday, the students participated in a networking workshop led by former school board member Traci O'Neal Ellis who offered tips and techniques for success in college. Each student received a customized box of business cards. Scholarship recipients are:

- Bartlett High School -- Cindy Alba, Emilia Sordyl, Steven Phan, Ummie Ansari and Alden Williams.
- Elgin High School -- Devin Wisniewski, Nereida Rosas, Katherine Irelan, Leslie Duran and Emmanuel Ntim.
- Larkin High School -- Justin Kelsey, Rebeca Solis, Sheila Vasquez, Emily Renteria, Ezzry Leon, Jessie VanDyke and Monserrat Rivera.
- South Elgin High School -- Sergio Perez, Jasmine Vergara, Alex Hernandez, Miguel Valencia and Colette Jones.
- Streamwood High School -- Brianna Roldan, Monica Kulasik, Adriana D'Souza, Vanessa Garcia and Bryan Lopez.
- DREAM Academy -- Rodrigo Arroyo, Montserrat Perez and Andres Bedolla.

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Three U46 educators win top state awards for work in health, support and at-risk programs

BY RAFAEL GUERRERO

Three School District U46 educators are the recipients of state awards recognizing their work in the areas of health education, educational support and at-risk students.

Tina Pizzitola was named the Illinois Education Association's Educational Support Professional of the Year, Natalie Simons received the Illinois School Health Educator of the Year award and Randal Ellison is the recipient of the 2018 Excellence in Education

All three were recognized for their achievements at Monday night's U46 school board meeting.

Pizzitola, a para-educator who rotates between schools based on need, received her Educational Support Professional of the Year award at the IEA's representative assembly earlier this month.

"Time after time, year after year, I am asked why do I do what I do, why do I stay. My answer to that is my students need me," Pizzitola said. "These children are my neighbors, this is my community."

Simons is a health teacher and assistant athletic director at Bartlett High School, and previously taught at Larkin High School in Elgin. According to a district news release, she was nominated for the health award by Jennifer Dellis, the Kenyon Woods Middle School health educator, and Lisa Meister, a Geneva High School health educator, who cited a number of reasons for her nomination, including her ability to mentor younger teachers.

"I tell my students the first day they walk into class this will be the most important class you will ever take," said Simons. "That's the challenge, to try to get them to buy into the importance of their well being."

Ellison, the district's coordinator for pre-K-12 discipline and educational options, received the top administrator award at the Illinois Coalition for Educating At-Risk Youth's annual conference last month.

"Mr. Ellison knows how these students have struggled with past experiences and is aware of the negative choices they have made, which could potentially affect their future," DREAM Academy Principal Lourdes Baker wrote in her nominating essay. "He believes that every student, regardless of their circumstances, has the ability to learn and become a productive member of society."

"To me, the greatest honor is to be recognized by your peers and by your teammates," Ellison told those in attendance at Monday's school board meeting.

SPORTS SECTION

---Daily Herald--- 4/26/18

Baseball: West Aurora gets past South Elgin

BY CRAIG BRUESKE

Admittedly, Alec Losselyoung was looking for a fastball.

West Aurora's junior second baseman lined a 1-0 pitch into the left-centerfield gap, driving pinch-runner Johnny Acevedo across with the game-winning run during the Blackhawks' topsy-turvy, 9-8 Upstate Eight Conference Valley Division baseball victory over South Elgin (4-5, 1-3) Thursday in Aurora.

"I was thinking first-pitch fastball," said Losselyoung, who went 2-for-5 with a pair of RBI and the game-winning double. "The first pitch was a little outside so I knew they probably were going to go right back to it.

"Thankfully, it probably wasn't thrown where they wanted it and I barreled it into left field."

Blackhawks coach John Reeves was pleased with Losselyoung's approach.

"He crushed it and when the kid (center fielder) bobbled it, we were going to go (home)," said Reeves. "Johnny runs pretty well so we'll take our chances. It worked out well."

With the win, the Blackhawks (9-7, 3-4) took 2 of 3 games from the defending UEC Valley champion Storm with a pair of walk-off victories.

"That was one intense series," said Reeves. "They can swing the bats. Yesterday, we kind of came out and laid an egg (in a 9-0 loss). The kid they threw yesterday was really good and then we made six errors so it was nice to come back out here and get the win.

"We hadn't played a series like that in a while."

Junior reliever Adrian Ruiz recorded the victory, tossing 5 innings of 3-run ball with 1 walk and 7 strikeouts.

"Adrian was fantastic," said Reeves. "Early on, he came in and picked up a save in a 3-2 win over Metea (Valley). He has had a couple so-so outings since but then today he was great."

Pitching proved to be the downfall for the Storm as 5 different players combined to hit 3 batters and issue 10 walks while scattering 6 base hits.

"Of those 13 guys, eight of them scored," said South Elgin coach Jim Kating. "You're not going to win many games like that, plus all of the passed balls and wild pitches. We just did not pitch well today and they earned it."

South Elgin grabbed a 3-0 lead in the top of the first, highlighted by Nick Poblocki's RBI double and 3 Blackhawks' errors.

However, West Aurora struck back for a 5-spot in the bottom half of the frame. Ryan Teuscher's 2-run single and Ruiz' RBI double were the big hits, supported by 4 walks and a hit batsman.

After Austin Doty's 2-run home run tied the game at 5-5 in the top of the second, the Blackhawks regained the lead with a second-inning run of their own before adding 2 more in the third. Cam Zimmerman, who was hit by a pitch 3 times, forced in a run when he was plunked by a pitch before Losselyoung's RBI single.

Poblocki's 2-run home run in the fifth narrowed South Elgin's deficit to 8-7 before Ben Hetelle's 2-out infield single in the top of the seventh tied the score at 8-8.

"We didn't play well but I'm very proud of the kids for staying with it, fighting back and tying the game," said Kating.