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Eighth-graders can participate in hands-on demonstrations

By Rafael Guerrero Courier-News



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Students watch a medical demonstration while attending the Explore 2017 career expo at Elgin Community College. Explore 2018 will welcome eighth-grade students and their teachers Wednesday to the Sears Centre. (School District U46)

Everything will be bigger at next week's career expo for School District U46 eighth-graders.

School district officials say there will be more exhibitors and attendees at Explore 2018 than at previous expos, and it all will take place at a larger venue. District U46 publicized Wednesday's Explore 2018 for months as it narrowed the career exploration event to solely one grade level.

There are 86 community and business partners expected at the expo, compared with 56 exhibitors who participated last year, district spokeswoman Mary Fergus said. The list

includes Advocate Sherman Hospital, Elgin Community College, Elgin police and HLR Engineering, among others.

Many of the exhibitors will provide hands-on demonstrations for students, the district announced in a recent news release. Examples include Elgin police bringing in a SWAT truck, Advocate Sherman personnel demonstrating on a baby mannequin and ECC conducting a DNA fingerprinting exercise.

District faculty and staff will be on hand to discuss core classes, electives and course sequences that students should take if they want to pursue a particular career path in high school. This year's expo is targeted to only eighth-grade students as the district pushes forward the plan to incorporate career pathways at the high schools. One of the proposals discussed earlier in the year is for seventh-graders to take career exploration courses and for eighth-graders to select a career pathway and its associated career academy.

"Students attending this year's expo will be able to explore among 16 industry clusters," Nancy Coleman, executive director of the Alignment Collaborative for Education, said in a statement. "Community and business leaders, along with U46 faculty and staff, will be prepared to help students connect their career interests with their educational experiences in U46 and beyond."

As many as 3,000 eighth-grade students from the district's eight middle schools will attend Explore 2018, Fergus said. That's an increase from the roughly 1,000 people who attended last year, she said.

Other changes include holding the expo during the week instead of the weekend. The location also moved from ECC to the Sears Centre in Hoffman Estates. The event is restricted to teachers and students, who will be bused from their schools to the arena.

"Explore has always done a great job of helping students consider how high school courses will connect with careers and college programs that might interest them, but the event was dependent on families fitting it into their already busy weekend schedules," U46 CEO Tony Sanders said in a statement. "I'm excited that this year all of our eighth-grade students will be able to experience our curriculum and career expo with their teachers."

---Daily Herald--- 9/7/18

How U-46's new commissary feeds thousands of hungry students

By [Madhu Krishnamurthy](#)

Director of Food Elena Hildreth talks about Elgin Area School District U-46's new commissary located in a 40,000-square-foot former warehouse on Bowes Road in Elgin, where employees prepare meals to feed more than 39,000 students daily.

Thousands of pounds of fresh fruits and vegetables are processed daily to feed a hungry multitude of students within Elgin Area School District U-46.

Twelve workers on the front lines assemble roughly 8,000 breakfasts and 13,000 lunches in the district's new commissary in Elgin for students at 41 elementary schools and a couple of preschool programs. They prep the day's lunch and the following day's breakfast starting at 5 a.m., and work until 2:30 p.m. for delivery to schools.

By the numbers

Elgin Area School District U-46's new commissary serves roughly 8,000 breakfasts and 13,000 lunches daily to students at 41 elementary schools and a couple of preschool programs. Menus vary from day to day, but here's how much food can be prepared on a given day to feed that multitude:

- 10,645 chicken sandwiches
- 10,390 cheese quesadillas
- 11,210 plums
- 3,000 pounds of baby carrots
- 2,329 pounds of melons
- 922 pounds of beans
- 788 pounds of grapes

Source: Elgin Area School District U-46

It takes a team of more than 200 food service employees and a cadre of drivers, custodians, and lunchroom supervisors to feed students at the state's second-largest school district.

"It is an orchestra," said Elena Hildreth, director of U-46's food and nutrition services -- a roughly \$16.4 million operation this school year. "It is really amazing."

U-46's eight middle schools and five high schools are self-sufficient, preparing their own foods on-site with only supplemental help from the commissary.

Housed in a 40,000-square-foot former warehouse at 1150 Bowes Road, the new commissary is twice the size of its former space at Eastview Middle School in Bartlett.

Officials say the new facility allows the district to offer more food choices, providing students better quality and fresher alternatives, and has room to expand the nutritional program. It is not set up to handle raw produce, so it's all assembly for now.

"Efficiencies and growth were the purpose of getting this commissary," Hildreth said. "We don't have to go get food stored at four different sites. Right now, we are really a receiving and a production site. A lot of the fruit goes out whole."

While 30,000 half-pint cartons of milk are delivered to schools directly, the commissary processes thousands of pounds of plums, watermelons, cantaloupes, grapes, blueberries, beans, baby carrots, chopped romaine lettuce and fresh broccoli, among other produce. Temperature-controlled storage rooms, a large production space with dedicated hose reels and washing areas for cleaning and sanitizing, and a separate allergen-free zone are the biggest improvements with this facility.

"We have a huge produce cooler so we can house fresh vegetables," said Hildreth, adding that large pallets of fruits and vegetables can be stored in another staging freezer. "Receiving so many pallets was difficult before. This is a completely nut-free facility. We are able to accommodate any allergen that's thrown our way."

With the additional storage, the commissary can put out more seasonal fresh fruits and vegetables, such as apples in October and provide salads more frequently on the menu.

"The kids love it," Hildreth said. "It is only the beginning. Growth is the goal. It's pretty exciting."

Officials hope to start hosting on-site cooking classes and training sessions in the spring. They also want to set up a student internship program with Elgin Community College and Northern Illinois University. Classes could be held in the commissary breakroom, which seats 75 people.

"We would be able to do tours and additional training ... partnering with the schools to work through that is the goal," Hildreth said.

SPORTS SECTION

Girls volleyball: Elgin squeaks by Streamwood in 3 sets

Daily Herald Reports

Elgin's girls volleyball team defeated Streamwood 25-20, 19-25, 25-22 in Upstate Eight action Thursday.

Lauren Dimayuga led the defense for Elgin (4-3) with 12 digs. Kennedy Venable added 5 kills and 2 aces and Inga Sucasca finished with 8 assists, 4 kills, 3 digs and 3 aces.

Streamwood (1-11) was led by Alex Silva with 15 digs and Mary Rackow with 8 assists. Lillian Dewsnap and Leslie Garcia finished with 5 kills each for the Sabres.