

Press Clippings 11/05/19

---Daily Herald---11/05/2019

U-46 students learn from national champion mariachi band

By: Madhu Krishnamurthy



Students in Elgin Area School District U-46's mariachi band, Mariachi Joya Dorada de U-46, follow the lead of Sebastian Villa, right, of Mariachi Sol Azteca, a nationally recognized mariachi group. The groups combined for a concert Monday night at Streamwood High School.



Angel Falcon, an Elgin High School junior and member of U-46's mariachi band, works with the Mariachi Sol Azteca band Monday before a free community concert that evening at Streamwood High School.



Claudia Ruiz, a Streamwood High School freshman and member of the Mariachi Joya Dorada de U-46 band, gets help from Sebastian Villa of Mariachi Sol Azteca during a workshop Monday at Streamwood High School.

Middle and high school students in Elgin Area School District U-46's mariachi band spent Monday learning from members of a nationally recognized mariachi group.

Later, Mariachi Joya Dorada de U-46 and Mariachi Sol Azteca, comprising students from the Grand Prairie Fine Arts Academy in Grand Prairie, Texas, jointly performed a free community concert at Streamwood High School.

The Texas band, led by Marta Ocampo, won first place in the 2019 Jose Hernandez' Mariachi Nationals this summer. It is touring the Midwest this fall to share its members' knowledge and experience with younger and developing mariachi programs.

During Monday's workshop, U-46 students worked on performance techniques, practiced new music and showmanship, and talked about the benefits and challenges of life as a musician with the visiting band.

U-46's mariachi program started in 2009 with guitar instruction offered to about 15 students at one school. Since then, it has expanded to about 125 students at eight schools: Abbott, Canton, Ellis, Kimball, Larsen and Tefft middle schools, and Elgin and Streamwood high schools. Students learn to play a variety of instruments, including guitar, guitarron, vihuela, violin and trumpet, and to use their voices. They practice at their home schools under teaching teams and come together in various ensembles for about 30 performances each school year.

"I am extremely proud of how far our extracurricular mariachi program has come since 2009," U-46 Fine Arts Coordinator Jaimie Giraldo said. "This group represents the beautiful culture and heritage of many of our students, and we're excited to share this traditional art form with our community."

---Daily Herald---11/04/2019

U-46 agrees to pay \$1.5 million to South Elgin boy attacked at school

By: Madhu Krishnamurthy



The family of Henry Sembdner, who was seriously injured by another student at Kenyon Woods Middle School in South Elgin in 2017, will be paid \$1.5 million as part of a settlement agreement in the lawsuit filed by the family against the school district, documents show.

The family of Henry Sembdner, a South Elgin boy who suffered brain trauma during a beating by a Kenyon Woods Middle School classmate in 2017, will receive \$1.5 million as part of a settlement agreement with the school district, according to documents obtained by the Daily Herald.

Kane County Judge Susan Boles dismissed the Sembdners' lawsuit against Elgin Area School District U-46 with prejudice on Oct. 29 as a result of both parties reaching an agreement on Oct. 21 in the 2017 lawsuit.

"The parties mutually understand and agree that this agreement does not constitute any admission of fault, responsibility or liability on the part of the board," according to the agreement.

The \$1.5 million lump-sum payment includes the cost of the Sembdners' legal fees. Money will be put into an account that Henry cannot access until he is 18, according to court records.

U-46 school board President Sue Kerr earlier declined to comment on the agreement. Sembdner family attorney Lance Northcutt earlier said the family's focus is on Henry, now 15 and a sophomore at South Elgin High School.

Henry was 12 and a Kenyon Woods seventh-grader at the time of the February 2017 attack that left him unconscious. He was assaulted in a school hallway where there were no security cameras after he and his attacker bumped into each other. The attacker picked Henry up and slammed him to the ground headfirst, rendering him unconscious and putting him in a coma for five days.

The family's lawsuit alleged district officials knew the attacker, who was 14, had a "lengthy history of behavioral infractions, including prior violent attacks against other students." It claimed staff failed to provide adequate care after Henry was injured. The school nurse initially called Henry's mom, Karen Sembdner, instead of 911, saying he had a bloody nose and broken tooth.

The 14-year-old who attacked Henry pleaded guilty to battery in July 2017. He was sentenced in juvenile court to 12 months of probation and was ordered to complete 100 hours of community service. He also had to undergo counseling and had to write an apology letter to Henry.

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U46 to pay \$1.5 million to South Elgin boy hospitalized for a month after being beaten by fellow student

By:Rafael Guerrero



Kenyon Woods Middle School student Henry Sembdner, seen here getting his head shaved during the school's St. Baldrick's Foundation celebration in 2017, will receive a \$1.5 million from School District U46 to settle a lawsuit filed after Sembdner was beaten into unconsciousness by another student and required a month of medical treatment for his injuries.

School District U46 will pay \$1.5 million to a South Elgin boy severely beaten by a fellow student at Kenyon Woods Middle School in 2017, a lawsuit settlement agreement obtained by The Courier-News says.

A lump sum payment is to be made to Henry Sembdner and his family, but is not an admission of guilt by the school district, the settlement said. Both sides are prohibited from discussing the deal, which was approved by the U46 School Board on Oct. 21 and finalized by Kane County Circuit Court Judge Susan Clancy Boles.

The document was acquired by the newspaper through a Freedom of Information Act request.

Henry Sembdner was a 12-year-old seventh-grader in 2017 when a fellow student slammed him to the ground and beat him into unconsciousness after Sembdner bumped into him, police said. His injuries required him to be placed into a medically induced coma and he required a month of treatment before he could return to school, officials said.

The attacker, who was 14 and in eighth-grade at the time, pleaded guilty in juvenile court to aggravated battery and was sentenced to 12 months of probation, 100 hours of community service, random drug testing and counseling for anger management and other issues.

The Sembdner lawsuit charged the South Elgin School and U46 mishandled the situation by waiting nearly 45 minutes to call 911 and failing to protect students from the boy, who reportedly had a "significant and lengthy history" of problems at the school, including prior violent attacks against other students that resulted in physical injuries, the suit said.