

Press Clippings 05/20/20

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Elgin Area School District U-46 announces 20 winners of the Superintendent's Scholarship

Submitted by: Elgin Area School District U-46

Twenty Elgin Area School District U-46 Class of 2020 members will move on to college in the fall with a \$1,000 Superintendent's Scholarship. All are first-generation college-bound students, with four winners from each of the district's five comprehensive high schools; Bartlett, Elgin, Larkin, South Elgin and Streamwood.

"These first generation students have proven through their academic and extracurricular accomplishments that they are college-ready, poised to take on the challenges of continuing their education past high school," said U-46 Superintendent Tony Sanders. "We look forward to watching these students continue to succeed in college and beyond."

Since the Superintendent's Scholarship fund was established in 2012 through the U-46 Educational Foundation, nearly 250 U-46 graduates, including this year's recipients, have each received a \$1,000 scholarship.

Eligible seniors submitted applications for the scholarship this past winter. The application included their high school transcript, a copy of their Federal Student Aid application, a letter of recommendation from an adult (a principal, teacher, academic advisor, employer, religious leader, etc.) and a personal essay.

A panel of judges selected the 20 scholarship recipients.

On April 23, recipients participated in a Zoom networking workshop led by former board of education member Traci O'Neal Ellis who emphasized the skills needed to make a good first impression and demonstrate self-confidence. Yvonne Irving from KCT Credit Union also spoke with the students. She addressed topics such as financial aid, student loans, and establishing a line of credit.

The 20 Class of 2020 Superintendent's Scholarship recipients are as follows:

- Bartlett High School: Grant Simmons, Karina Flores, Michael Ian Rabanal and Sophie Praxmarer
- Elgin High School: Arielle Taylor, Briana Brown, Emily Acevedo, and Monserrat Ponce
- Larkin High School: Berenice Gomez, Edson Rangel, Marteena Mendel-Duckins, and Ricardo Golden-Garcia
- South Elgin High School: Dulce Aguilar, Hannah Kolbusz, Karolina Terlikowski and Mercedes Alejandre

• Streamwood High School: Brandon Munoz, Gabriella Cardinale, Kaleb Loudon and Lynise Gutierrez.

Virtual graduations on in U-46 despite pushback

By Seth Hancock

School District U-46 is still moving forward with a virtual graduation ceremony for high school seniors as COVID-19 shutdowns remain despite public pushback.

U-46 Superintendent Tony Sanders announced the decision on April 29 that instead of the rescheduled graduation at the Sears Centre in Hoffman Estates on July 11, the district will instead hold a virtual graduation on June 13 as the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) initially stated no in-person graduations would be allowed.

The ISBE later clarified that local districts, administrations and school boards would be allowed local control to make decisions.

The Examiner spoke to Bartlett High School senior Glen Nowak who said U-46 is being overly cautious, and he along with his fellow senior friends believe this decision is being made in haste.

"Personally, I think it's too far away," Nowak said. "I think there's data coming out suggesting that we might be fine by July."

Nowak, who plans to attend Indiana State University, said he saw his older brother graduate a few years ago at the Sears Centre and he wants a ceremony, the virtual ceremony is too personal.

"It's kind of a mixed emotion," Nowak said. "We want to have a graduation, but we don't want it this way.... I don't think a virtual graduation will be the same."

A petition has also been started by Jean Driscoll, aunt of a Streamwood High School senior, which has over 2,000 signatures. The petition title: "U-46 High School Seniors deserve a proper high school graduation."

In her petition statement, Driscoll wrote: "Streamwood High School students of the Class of 2020 will be honored in this virtual ceremony while sitting at home in front of their computer screen. And like some Seniors have said with disgust and disappointment 'Graduation attire: my pjs! This is their 'Super Bowl' moment and it's being stolen away from them. We owe them better than this!!!"

"Most of the Class of 2020 has already lost their Senior Prom, Spring Sport activities, Senior Trips and the list continues to grow," Driscoll added. "High School graduation is a day these kids will never get back and we need to find a way to make it happen and recognize them for all their hard work."

Several of those signing the petition made comments that they are seniors who have worked hard for 12 years and are "devastated" by the decision. Several suggested the district be more creative to hold some type of in-person graduation that follows "social distancing" guidelines like other school districts have.

Sanders announced the plan to continue with the June 13 virtual ceremony while the district hopes to plan another recognition later.

Sanders responded when asked what standards are being used to determine

July 11 would not be safe and what message does U-46 have for those disappointed by the decisions?

"I am sorry," Sanders said. "Our high school graduation ceremonies are to recognize your accomplishments. I, like you, and your principals, and your teachers, will mourn the loss of an in-person ceremony. However, we will do our best to make our virtual graduation ceremony meaningful for you and your family. Further, we will ensure your accomplishments are celebrated in-person as soon as we are allowed to do so. That is a commitment our Board of Education and I make to you."

Noting that the ISBE has "relaxed" its stance on in-person graduations, Sanders stated regional superintendents are now making decisions for U-46 providing links to statements from Patricia Dal Santo, regional superintendent of schools in Kane County, and Darlene Ruscitti, regional superintendent of schools in DuPage County

Dal Santo wrote "do not conduct any type of in-person graduation ceremony based on current levels of COVID-19 activity in Kane County," and Ruscitti echoed that for DuPage County "including drive-through ceremonies" also based on "current levels."

Neither provided those numbers nor any standards to why those numbers mean it would be unsafe to hold any type of in-person ceremony nor any evidence of holding knowledge of where the numbers may be in July.

While Sanders stated U-46 will follow orders, other school districts have used local control. Several districts have held in-person graduation ceremonies even under "current levels," not under possible levels in nearly two months.

Reavis High School in Cook County held an outdoor graduation ceremony with "social distancing" measures on Saturday, May 16 where it stated 441 graduates crossed the stage. Even ear-

lier on May 6, Bradley Bourbonnais Community High School in Kankakee County had over 400 seniors participate as seniors and their families waited in their cars to be called individually into the school to take photos and receive a diploma.

Both of those schools lie within the same region as U-46 under Gov. J.B. Pritzker's so-called "reopening" plan.

Shutdown orders across the country were initially justified under concerns that there may be a lack of hospital bed space and supplies, concerns that most government officials now admit never materialized. Now, governors like Pritzker are saying there may need to be a vaccine, which is in his "reopening" plan, before a true opening of society.

Beyond this "mission creep" and lack of standards, citizens are also pushing back against an apparent hypocrisy from public officials.

A Bartlett resident who signed the graduation petition wrote: "There is no reason not to be resuming life by July 11th! Shelter in Place was to understand the virus and get medical preparedness. Both are accomplished. Low morbidity rates are published. This is not the plague, most recover. Life needs to resume. If Pritzker's wife can leisurely travel, and the Mayor of Chicago can get a haircut, it's time to resume our normal lives. Our seniors suffered enough."

Pritzker admitted on Friday, May 15 that his family has traveled to both Florida and Wisconsin despite his shutdown orders claiming the ability to ban "nonessential travel" of residents.

After getting a haircut while other residents have not been allowed to during the shutdown, Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot responded: "I'm the public face of this city. I'm on national media and I'm out in the public eye. I take my personal hygiene very seriously. I felt like I needed to have a haircut. I'm not able to do that myself, so I got a haircut."

U-46 driver's education nixed for 2020-21 year

By Seth Hancock

School District U-46 has cancelled driver's education for the 2020-2021 school year citing the inability to do so over the COVID-19 shutdown. Additionally, the district updated families on grading during its "distance learning."

In a May 15 statement from Lela Majstorovic, assistant superintendent for secondary schools, she wrote that over 2,100 hour of behind-the-wheel instruction was left incomplete for the current semester since schools were shutdown on March 13 under Gov. J.B. Pritzker's orders.

Majstorovic stated that the district is making determinations on how to make up those hours for current students while announcing the cancellation of driver's education next year.

"All new Driver's Ed offerings for the 2020-21 school year are cancelled, effective immediately," Majstorovic wrote. "With no way to meet the requirement of six hours behind the wheel instruction per student, per semester, we cannot deliberately continue to enroll students in a course that will not result in license attainment."

Majstorovic added: "We know that this is not good news, but we wanted to make you aware as soon as possible so that students who had enrolled can be scheduled for an alternative class or a study hall. School counselors will be reaching out to affected students regarding their schedules for next year."

Regarding grades for this semester, the district stated that students and parents will now have a chance to start seeing semester grades on Infinite Campus. Suzanne Johnson, deputy superintendent of instruction, wrote in a May 14 statement that teachers began grade finalization on May 15.

"If you see an estimated semester grade in green, it is not necessarily the final grade that your student will re-

ceive," Johnson wrote. "All middle school and high school students still have an opportunity to relearn and reassess any second semester standards until 3 p.m. on Tuesday, May 26, 2020. Please reach out to your student's teacher to learn more about these opportunities and how your student can improve his or her grade."

Johnson added: "For any student who receives an incomplete as a final grade, they will be required to complete the course or will risk having an 'NC' on their transcript. A grade of NC means that no credit was earned for the course and the course was not completed. Students will have opportunities to complete the course for credit through summer learning."

A student's grade cannot be lower than what it was prior to March 13 according to Johnson.

Beyond the classroom changes, the government-mandated shutdowns have led to nearly 40 million new unemployed Americans and the government, through the school system, continues to use taxpayer dollars to hand out meals.

Superintendent Tony Sanders congratulated U-46 staff, who have been deemed "essential" and continue to receive paychecks, for reaching 1 million taxpayer funded meals (breakfast, lunch, dinner) being given away and 339,406. The district also admits little oversight as the food meant for "all children 18 and under," according to the district, requires no documentation of need or child present to receive.

The district celebrated the handouts according to a May 14 press release: "School administrators and food and nutrition workers will pause to make a little noise - clanging lids, ringing bells and banging drums - to recognize the million meal mark at 10:30 a.m. Friday at the onset of meal distribution."

State orders cast shadow on high school fall sports

By Seth Hancock

Uncertainty remains as to when things will return to some normalcy as COVID-19 shutdown orders persist.

For high school athletes, the shutdown has already cancelled the 2019-2020 spring season and interfered with the conclusion of some winter sports. Several state tournaments were cancelled this past winter in the middle of the playoffs which effected teams like the St. Charles North boys basketball team which was headed to the sectional finals game when the season was halted.

Although fall coaches are still planning for the upcoming 2020-2021 season with anticipation that athletics will be allowed to return, the shutdown will still have an effect as summer camps and summer leagues are being cancelled leaving coaches without one of the key times for player evaluation for the upcoming seasons.

Streamwood boys soccer coach Matt Polovin is used to scheduling some summer friendly games for his Sabres while also preparing for workouts in June. His summer soccer camps are normally held in July.

"Everything is cancelled right now," Polovin said. "I was told I can't even do my camp at the end of July."

Although not able to work with his team in person, Polovin said he is able to keep in touch with his players.

Polovin said the Sabres will have to run a "virtual summer camp" akin to the distance learning going on across

the country. He said he is providing drills and activities for his guys to stay in shape and hone their skills on their own.

"I always tell them to make sure to do things safely," Polovin said. "The last thing I want is a bunch of guys getting together to workout. I just want them to get as many touches on the ball as they can and giving them a bunch of fitness things to do. A lot of the stuff are things they can do in their house."

Polovin added: "I'm sure it's difficult being confined. It's tough whoever you are, so I'm not putting any demands on them. I'm just telling them if they want to be successful when we return, they have to put in the work on their own. It's up to them."

Several area football teams, like the Glenbard North Panthers, are using Hudl and Google to send lessons to players.

The Panthers did get some encouragement last week from Chicago Bears linebacker Roquan Smith who tweeted a special video message for Glenbard North.

"I just want to encourage you guys to continue to work hard," Smith said. "I know time is a little bit tough right now, but just work hard. Light will eventually shine this fall. Things will go back to normal. So, just continue to work hard and do the right things and listen to your coaches and make a run for it all. Good luck to you guys, and I'm wishing you all the best. I'll be cheering you on from afar."

Police Reports

SOUTH ELGIN

Tuesday, May 5

- ★ At 4:18 a.m., police responded to Coster USA, 1612 Louise Drive, for a report of an activated commercial fire alarm.
- ★ At 12:43 p.m., police responded to 716 Michigan for a report of a domestic in progress.
- ★ At 4:11 p.m., police responded to 636 Lucille for a report of an intoxicated subject.
- ★ At 4:54 p.m., police responded to 380 Hobart for a report of a suspicious incident.
- ★ At 5:11 p.m., police responded to 380 Hobart for a report of a suspicious person.
- ★ At 5:41 p.m., police responded to 1441 S. Blackhawk for a report of a domestic.
- ★ At 8:22 p.m., police responded to 520 E. Thorndale for a report of a suspicious vehicle.
- ★ At 9:29 p.m., police responded to South Elgin Food and Liquor, 236 W. State, for a request to remove an unwanted subject.

Wednesday, May 6

- ★ At 2:33 a.m., police responded to the vicinity of Sagebrook and Crane for a report of an accident with extrication.
- ★ At 7:43 a.m., at the police department, 10 N. Water, officers responded for a 911 investigation.
- ★ At 11:21 a.m., police responded to 1670 Deer Pointe for a request to assist fire department personnel.
- ★ At 11:32 a.m., police responded to Stowell Peddy Park, 2075 McDonald Road, for a trespassing complaint.
- ★ At 12:18 p.m., police responded to

671 W. Thornwood for a report of a domestic in progress.

- ★ At 2:49 p.m., police responded to Jewell, 375 Randall Road, for a report of a safety or health hazard.
- Thursday, May 7
- ★ At 2:29 a.m., police responded to 586 Independence for a report of a suspicious person.
 - ★ At 4:46 a.m., police responded to Mi Vallarta, 1101 N. LaFox, for a report of an activated alarm.
 - ★ At 7:07 a.m., police responded to 315 Thornwood for a report of an activated commercial fire alarm.
 - ★ At 4:49 p.m., police responded to Waters Edge of South Elgin, 418 N. Center, for a report of a subject with a mental issue.
 - ★ At 5:08 p.m., police responded to Home Depot, 440 Randall Road, for a report of a hit and run.
 - ★ At 5:35 p.m., police responded to Caputo's, 622 Randall Road, for a report of an obstruction in the roadway.
 - ★ At 7:21 p.m., police responded to SEBA Park, 151 S. Water, for a trespassing complaint.
 - ★ At 8:58 p.m., police responded to the vicinity of Concord and Hancock for a fireworks complaint.
 - ★ At 9:19 p.m., police responded to 664 Franklin for a report of a domestic in progress.
- Friday, May 8
- ★ At 4:01 a.m., police responded to McDonalds, 100 N. McLean Blvd., for a report of an activated commercial fire alarm.
 - ★ At 6:41 a.m., police responded to the vicinity of Sunbury and Trenton for a report of a safety or health hazard.
 - ★ At 11:22 a.m., police responded to

Mi Vallarta, 1101 N. LaFox, for a report of an activated alarm.

- ★ At 11:48 a.m., police responded to 1565 Deer Pointe for a report of a suspicious person.
- ★ At 12:23 p.m., police responded to 1425 Exeter for a child custody dispute.
- ★ At 2:39 p.m., police responded to the vicinity of Illinois Route 31 and South McLean for a report of criminal damage to property.
- ★ At 3:25 p.m., police responded to the Skate Park at Sperry Park, 730 Dean Drive, for a trespassing complaint.
- ★ At 4:32 p.m., police responded to the vicinity of Windsor and Concord for a report of a disturbance.
- ★ At 7:30 p.m., police responded to Riverside Pizza and Pub, 456 Redington Drive, for a fraud complaint.
- ★ At 7:42 p.m., police responded to 1336 Burke for a report of a suspicious

noise.

- ★ At 8:46 p.m., police responded to 633 Medford for a report of a domestic in progress.
 - ★ At 9:02 p.m., police responded to 195 Locust for a report of a domestic in progress.
 - ★ At 9:58 p.m., police responded to Corron Elementary School, 455 Thornwood Way, for a report of a drug law violation.
 - ★ At 11:23 p.m., police responded to Custom Aluminum, 475 Stevenson Road, for a report of an activated commercial fire alarm.
- Saturday, May 9
- ★ At 2:40 a.m., police responded to 369 Ann for a report of a disturbance.
 - ★ At 7:53 a.m., police responded to Busch LLC, 373 Joseph, for a report of an activated alarm.
 - ★ At 10:12 a.m., police responded to 124 Wilson for a report of an attempted theft.

U-46 Board approves purchase of used buses

By Seth Hancock

The current bus fleet in School District U-46 is 345 total buses (179 large/167 small) and is in line with the district's plan according to Jeffrey Prowell, director of transportation.

Prowell gave an update to the Board of Education in April on the district's age and obsolescence plan which was created in 1985 and modified annually. "As of 2018, the fleet is current and in line with A&O (age and obsolescence) Plan with a few exceptions that have been approved by the Director of Transportation. Buses scheduled for replacement may be retained longer based on operating condition and mileage as deemed appropriate by the Director of Transportation," the replacement plan states.

Buses, both small and large, are put on an 11-year cycle with fewer than 150,000 miles.

For this year, the recommendation was to replace 20 large buses which have between 110,674 and 150,698 miles.

The board approved of the purchase of 20 used buses for \$1.4 million at its Monday, May 18 meeting. All used buses come from Round Lake School District 116 with a three-year warranty for engines and five-year warranty for transmissions, and all have fewer than 20,000 miles.

Prowell, who said purchasing used buses compared to new will save the district about \$500,000, and said the

district has purchased buses used at Round Lake in the past and they are "well maintained."

Buying used buses conflicts with the recommendations to the board last year.

"Last year, I recommended to the board that we purchase new school buses and that was based on some safety features that were newly available last year," Prowell said. "Those safety features did not have any positive impact on our operations, and in addition this year Midwest Transit, the vendor that we typically buy buses from... has over 1,200 used buses that they're trying to get rid of."

Prowell added: "So, the pricing on used buses was significantly better this year."

Additionally, the district purchased some gasoline buses rather than diesel buses last year. Prowell said the gasoline bus engine being used is only in its second year and the district wants more time to collect more data before purchasing more gasoline buses.

"We have been testing them," Prowell said. "They are working out well. We have some mile per gallon concerns. The market is very quickly changing to gasoline. About over 50 percent of the buses sold this year will be gasoline."

Beyond this year, an additional 158 large buses and 145 small buses are expected to be replaced at some point by 2029-2030.



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