

Press Clippings 2/24/2022

Chicago Tribune/The Courier-News

U-46 TalentFest scouts out best from area high schools ---

2/23/2022

By Kathy Cichon



Coming in 2nd place at the South Elgin High School Talent Show and progressing to U-46 TalentFest 2022 at the Hemmens Cultural Center on March 8 is The Can Line, made up of percussionists in the school's drum line. (L-R) Performing at their school competition in South Elgin are (Jr) Christopher Avila, (Jr) Gabbi Flynn, (Jr) Anna Fleck, (Sr) Joe Lortie, and (Sr) Collin Van Der Karr. Their piece is called "Stinken Garbage," thus the skeleton, and features unique drum parts designed for trash cans. The members have been collectively playing drums for around 5-6 years. (Photo by Dave Tonge / HANDOUT)

When Elgin High School junior Jonathan Miranda performed with dance partner senior Yasmin Rodriguez in the school's talent competition, it was the first time he performed a Mexican folk dance without wearing a mask, allowing the audience to see his full face.

"Being able to express myself for the first time in front of an audience was pretty thrilling," he said. "And being able to do it again is pretty exciting as well."

As one of two winners selected at the high school competition, they get to perform their traditional dance again as part of **U-46 TalentFest**, an annual competition featuring top acts from each of the district's five high schools.

"I was super excited," Miranda said of being selected. "Just the possibility of expressing our culture and our tradition was really exciting to me. It was really thrilling."

TalentFest 2022 will be held at 7 p.m. March 8 at the Hemmens Cultural Center in Elgin. Tickets are \$5 and can be purchased in advance or at the door.

With the exception of last year, TalentFest has been held annually since 2010. The top two acts selected from the talent shows at Bartlett High School, Elgin High School, Larkin High School, South Elgin High School and Streamwood High School compete against each other to take home a prize.

During the first part of the competition, all 10 acts perform. During intermission, audience members vote for their favorite acts. Performing during the intermission this year will be Mariachi Joya Dorada de U-46, which includes students from throughout U-46.



Senior Sarvika Nalla performs an Indian dance to “Adivo Alladivo” by Annamayya Keerthana at the Streamwood High School Talent Fest on Feb. 11. Nalla was chosen as a finalist and will compete in the U-46 TalentFest at the Hemmens on March 8. (John Konstantaras)

The five acts with the most votes then perform a second time, during which five judges evaluate them. Judges choose first, second and third place winners, who receive a cash prize and plaque. The school with the most votes combined between its two acts is awarded the traveling TalentFest Trophy.

The idea for the districtwide TalentFest came from a brainstorming session of the Hemmens Advisory Board after the recession.

“Those of us on the Hemmens Advisory Board were trying to come up with ideas for inexpensive programming that might be locally based that would enhance the Hemmens and of course the restaurants and places downtown that depend on the Hemmens, or at least benefit from it, and be very inexpensive to produce too,” Coordinator Jeff Grosser said.

Two things came out of that committee: Elgin Short Film Festival and TalentFest.

“Both totally different kinds of programs, but both arts-based and programs that have been proven to be successful,” Grosser said.

One of the real motivators for him, he said, was that he has always been an encourager of talent that wasn’t necessarily structured or included in traditional high school curriculum.

“Many of them have no outlet at the high school, in an organized sense,” Grosser said. “This is a chance for them to show their gifts and talents that they wouldn’t have an opportunity otherwise to show off.”

Among the unusual or unexpected acts that have participated in TalentFest over the years were yo-yo artists who entertained the audience.

This year’s competitors include a variety of dancers and musicians. In addition to Miranda and Rodriguez performing Mexican folk dance, Elgin High School senior Isabella Cornejo will perform hip-hop dance. From Streamwood High School, senior Sarvika Nalla will perform an Indian cultural dance and seniors Melanie Feliciano and Katie Cordon will perform a vocal duet.

Larkin High School seniors Joshua James and Kayla Griffin will perform a vocal duet, and senior Emvi Legaspi and sophomore Emialy Gilaspi will perform a vocal duet with piano. Representing Bartlett High School are junior Angel Salas performing vocals with guitar and senior Sophie Leo, also a vocalist.

South Elgin High School will be represented by Feather Report, a jazz band featuring seniors Andrew Hilario, Dylan Dankel, Collin Van Der Karr, Olivia Diehl and junior Christian Freehill; and The Can Line, a percussion line featuring juniors Christopher Avila, Gabbi Flynn, Anna Fleck and seniors Joe Lortie and Collin Van Der Karr.

“When I first did it I thought we would have a plethora of singers. But I’d say every show has proven to be a multifaceted talent show. And it’s just worked out that way,” Grosser said. “There’s no directive, we don’t screen the acts. Each school, from its talent show, choose what they feel are their two best acts. And it’s just worked out to be a nice variety of entertainment. Which I love, because it makes our show that much more interesting.”

Judges for this year’s TalentFest are: Jaimie Giraldo, fine arts coordinator for School District U-46; Carlos Chavez, prevention specialist at the Ecker Center and chair of the Elgin Symphony Orchestra Community Advisory Board; and Marlene Daubert, Deacon at Zion Lutheran Church, co-president of the Elgin branch of the AAUW, and board member of the U-46 Educational Foundation.

Student judges are Cami Jones and Brendan Losurdo, participants in the music program at St. Charles North High School.

U-46 TalentFest 2022

When: 7 p.m. March 8

Where: The Hemmens Cultural Center, 45 Symphony Way, Elgin

Tickets: \$5

Information: [facebook.com/talentfestu46](https://www.facebook.com/talentfestu46) or Hemmens.org

Daily Herald

Elgin police investigating Tuesday afternoon shooting --- 2/23/2022

By Rick West

Elgin police are investigating a Tuesday afternoon shooting on the city's near east side.

Police responded about 2:30 p.m. Tuesday to the shooting on the 100 block of North Gifford Street. When the officers arrived, they found an 18-year-old Hispanic man shot outside. He was transported to an area hospital with what police said were minor injuries.

Elgin police Sgt. Heather Lencioni, the department's public information, said officers closed off the area for about two hours while investigating.

Lencioni said that due to the proximity of the shooting, **Elgin Area School District U-46** was notified of the police presence. Dream Academy and the offices at 355 Chicago Street notified police they were going on soft lockdown. Police soon moved the perimeter further north, away from the school, during the initial stages of the investigation.

Lencioni said follow-up phone calls to Elgin Academy and St. Mary's School were placed as a courtesy, but the schools were not in the immediate area of concern.

The case remains open and actively under investigation.

Anyone with information is asked to call the Special Investigations Division at (847) 289-2600 or send an anonymous text to 847411 and include "ElginPD" at the beginning.

Chicago Tribune/The Courier-News

Elgin police investigate Gifford Street shooting --- 2/23/2022

By Gloria Casas



Elgin police investigated a shooting in the 100 block of North Gifford Street Tuesday. (Gloria Casas / The Courier-News)

One person was injured in a shooting on North Gifford Street Tuesday afternoon, Elgin police said.

Officers responded to a reported shooting around 2:29 p.m. in the 100 block of North Gifford and found a person injured, according to a press release. The person was taken to an area hospital. No details about the person's age, gender, or condition were released.

Elgin police had a large presence in the area while actively investigating the scene. **School District U-46** officials and Elgin Academy authorities were notified of the shooting, which occurred near several schools. Schools outside the incident area were not immediately notified, but EPD is doing follow-up with those schools, the release stated.

Tuesday's shooting is the ninth of the year, according to EPD's Transparency Hub. The victim is the third person injured in a shooting this year data showed.

Daily Herald

Boys' Basketball: Bartlett holds off Geneva --- 2/23/2022

By Kevin McGavin, Daily Herald Correspondent

Conrad Luczynski flirted with a triple double Wednesday night at the Class 4A Wheaton Warrenville South boys' basketball regional semifinal nightcap.

But arguably the most pivotal play the **Bartlett** 7-foot-3 senior post made was a bounce pass to a cutting Keegan Kunzer with less than 50 seconds to play in the Hawks' rematch with Geneva.

Kunzer converted the layup, and Luczynski essentially iced the Hawks' 47-42 victory by not only blocking his seventh Geneva shot on the ensuing possession but also collecting the ball for his last of 18 rebounds.

Held to two first-half free throws, Luczynski had 12 of his 14 points after the intermission.

"They played me entirely differently than the first time we played," Luczynski said of the Vikings' defensive approach. "They were fronting and back-siding me the whole first half."

But last December, a win for Geneva at home, was seemingly an eternity ago.

"It was probably their worst game of the year," Geneva coach Scott Hennig said of the schools' nonconference game early in the season.

Bartlett (25-6), the No. 7 seed, advances to the championship game Friday night to play second-seeded WW South, which soundly defeated Glenbard East 68-34, in the doubleheader opener.

Geneva, the No. 10 seed, had its season close at 16-15.

"After the good pass (to Kunzer for the score), I timed it perfectly (on the ensuing block)," Luczynski said. "It's hard to stop a 7-3 man."

Geneva was able to hang around until the bitter end, however, as Bartlett failed to close out the game from the free-throw line.

But it proved an uphill battle the entire way for the Vikings.

Geneva came out of the gate cold from the 3-point arc and ended up shooting 14 of 44 for the game.

Bartlett never trailed, nor was the game tied, as the Hawks' Kelton McEwen single-handedly outscored Geneva in the first 12 minutes of the game with 11 of his game-high 16 points.

"It was a big game, and my shots just happened to be falling," said McEwen, who finished with three 3-pointers and a 3-point play. "When (Luczynski) gets it going, it opens up the whole court with all his rebounds and blocked shots."

Geneva would have two players step up to make it a game.

Guard Michael Lawrence, who led the Vikings with 12 points, and reserve Colin Hasty also revived the Geneva spirits with his perimeter shooting off the bench.

The latter scored all 11 of his points after halftime on three 3-pointers of his own.

"I was told to shoot with confidence," Hasty said. "I thought we were going to come back but just fell short."

"(The Hawks) are going to give Wheaton South all they can handle," Hennig predicted.

Chicago Tribune/The Courier-News

'You can't change 7-foot-3': Geneva tries to keep the ball out of Conrad Luczynski's hands, but that goes only so far against Bartlett's senior center --- 2/23/2022

By Paul Johnson



Bartlett's Conrad Luczynski, left, blocks a shot by Geneva's Ryan Huskey during a Class 4A Wheaton Warrenville South Regional semifinal on Wednesday, Feb. 23, 2022. Bartlett won 47-42. (Jon Langham / The Beacon-News)

Geneva wanted to make sure **Bartlett's Conrad Luczynski** had a hard time getting the ball down low in the first half Wednesday.

The 7-foot-3 senior center scored only two points in the half, both from the free-throw line.

But the Vikings extended their defense after halftime, and Luczynski took advantage.

"In the second half, they decided to go man-to-man a little bit more, and that's what really opened us up and gave us a bigger lead," he said.

Luczynski scored 12 of his 14 points in the second half and also had 19 rebounds and six blocked shots as the Hawks edged Geneva 47-42 in a Class 4A Wheaton Warrenville South Regional semifinal.

"We finished strong," Luczynski said. "Kelton (McEwen) hit some big shots. Everyone played well. We played our hearts out."

The Hawks (24-6), who will play the host Tigers (29-2) in the regional championship game at 7 p.m. Friday, are shooting for their fifth regional title in program history and first since the 2017-18 season.



Geneva's Mick Lawrence, right, tries to swipe the ball from Bartlett's Kelton McEwen during a Class 4A Wheaton Warrenville South Regional semifinal on Wednesday, Feb. 23, 2022. (Jon Langham / The Beacon-News)

Bartlett held a 19-15 halftime lead behind McEwen, a sophomore guard who scored 11 of his game-high 16 points in the first half against Geneva (16-15).

"He's a heck of a shooter," Luczynski said. "He has so much potential. I can't wait to see what he turns into senior year. He's going to be a monster. Trust me."

Luczynski wasted little time getting going in the third quarter, scoring on a putback with 6:50 left, and he accounted for the Hawks' first seven points as they extended the lead to 26-17.

"When you extend (the pressure) like that, you don't have as many bodies around the big guy down low," Bartlett coach Jim Wolfsmith said. "That's the risk you take."

Geneva used 3-pointers to stay in the game, hitting six. After a 3-pointer by sophomore forward Hayden Vostal cut the lead to 45-42, McEwen made a pair of free throws in the final seconds to ice the game.

Geneva made just 14 of 50 shots from the field.

"I thought our kids played hard," Geneva coach Scott Hennig said. "We didn't shoot it real well. My kids battled. The game plan was good. It was a one-possession game."



Bartlett's Conrad Luczynski, left, grabs a rebound as Geneva's Max Jensen reaches for the ball during a Class 4A Wheaton Warrenville South Regional semifinal on Wednesday, Feb. 23, 2022. (Jon Langham / The Beacon-News)

Hennig said Luczynski's impact can't be overstated.

"There were some possessions where he got tips or blocked shots," Hennig said. "We knew it going in. We know it now. We'll know it next week. You can't change 7-foot-3. It is what it is."

Junior guard Mick Lawrence paced the Vikings with 12 points. Junior guard Colin Hasty added 11 points off the bench, all coming in the second half.

Bartlett avenged a 57-51 loss to Geneva on Nov. 30.

"I was dying for this rematch," Luczynski said. "It was like a revenge game. It feels good, senior year. I feel like we have a good chance for a regional championship."

Although his team won't be playing, Hennig is looking forward to the regional final.

"They're going to give Wheaton South all they can handle," Hennig said. "I think it will be a fun game to watch — different styles."

Second-seeded Wheaton Warrenville South, which advanced with a 68-34 win against Glenbard East, didn't play Bartlett during the regular season.

"Big stage, the place will be packed, Friday night — you can't ask for anything more," Wolfsmith said. "You hope your seniors go out with a quality game."