

Press Clippings - 2-16-2023

– The Courier News –

Elgin News Digest: U-46 to waive registration fees again

Feb. 16, 2023

By Mike Danahey

District U-46 set to waive registration fees again next year

School District U-46 will be waiving registration fees for all grade levels and middle and high school parents will not have to pay instructional materials fees and ChromeBook repair insurance for the 2023-24 school year.

The fees were also waived this year and in 2021-22 because the costs were covered with pandemic funding from the federal government. It's likely this will be the time the district will be able to do so, U-46 Financial Operations Director Dale Burnidge told the school board this week.

No other fee changes are planned, Burnidge said.

The fee to participate in middle school athletics will be \$80 per sport. High school athletic fees will be \$150 per sport and \$200 for football, with a maximum of two high school sports fees per school year and family maximum of four sports fees per year at the high school level.

The fee to take part in other after-school activities will be \$40.

Other optional high school fees include \$250 for behind-the-wheel driver's education and \$13 for a driver's ed textbook; \$45.75 to take a lifeguard training course; \$15 to take an independent physical education course and \$45 for a basic yearbook.

The school board will finalize the costs at its Feb. 27 meeting.

To read the full article click [here](#).

– The Daily Herald –

Larkin's Bring a Book to Life dance performance returns with 'Mr. Men Little Miss'

Feb. 16, 2023

Daily Herald Report



Larkin High School's Visual and Performing Arts Dance Academy's Bring a Book to Life performance returns this week with "Mr. Men Little Miss." *Courtesy of Kelli Myhre-Bahwell*



Larkin High School's Visual and Performing Arts Dance Academy's Bring a Book to Life performance returns this week with "Mr. Men Little Miss." *Courtesy of Kelli Myhre-Bahwell*

Larkin High School's VPAA Dance Academy's Bring a Book to Life performance returns this week with "Mr. Men Little Miss," a dance production based on the "Mr. Men and Little Miss" books created in the 1970s and 1980s by British author Roger Hargreaves and his son Adam Hargreaves.

It is directed by Margaret Palmer and Kelli Myhre-Bahwell.

Shows are at 7 p.m. Friday, Feb. 17, and at 3 and 7 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 18. Tickets, available at the door, are \$10 for adults and \$5 for seniors and students.

The **Larkin High School** Auditorium is at 1475 Larkin Avenue, Elgin. Call (847) 888-5200 for details.

To view all pictures click [here](#).

– The Courier News – Residents say new ice skating rink a priority as city gathers feedback for revised parks and recreation plan

Feb. 16, 2023

By Gloria Casas



J. Blue, a landscape architect for the SmithGroup consulting firm, led a public discussion Wednesday night about proposed changes for city parks that could be part of the revised Elgin Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

Elgin residents pushed for a new skating rink at a parks and recreation master plan meeting Wednesday, where they were briefed on possible changes to city parks and the Elgin Sports Complex.

Elgin’s last Parks and Recreation Master Plan was adopted in 2011, and the city is working with the SmithGroup consulting firm to update the document.

Many people voiced the desire to have a new ice skating rink, which the city hasn’t had since 2018 — the last year City Skate rink was open in the Civic Center Plaza. Renovations to the plaza eliminated space for the venue.

Parks and Recreation Director Maria Cumpata said she knows a new rink location is high on the public’s list for things they’d like to have.

“We hear the community. It’s on our radar,” she said.

Finding a suitable spot for it is the problem they need to resolve, Cumpata said.

Recreational skating and competitions were once offered on the lagoons in Lords Park but that stopped in the late 1950s. One residents, Jaime Garcia, urged the city to make those shallow water features a priority again even if skating there is no longer feasible.



The City Skate public ice rink in downtown Elgin was a fixture on the Civic Center Plaza until renovation work in the area started in 2019. Some residents say finding a new home for an ice rink is a high priority as the city revises its long-range parks and recreation master plan. (Mike Danahey / The Courier-News)

J. Blue, a landscape architect for the SmithGroup, said they know the lagoons “need some love” and dredging them is on the list of recommendations for the updated plan.

One topic that had been expected to come up at the meeting was the Lords Park Family Aquatic Center, which has been closed for three consecutive summers and won’t be opening this year.

Discussion of the facility's future will be the topic of a special meeting scheduled for 6 to 8 p.m. Wednesday, March 15, at **Lords Park Elementary School** library, 323 Waverly Drive.

The pool had been slated to reopen this year but city staff could not guarantee they would be able to hire enough lifeguards to man it, which prompted the Elgin City Council to nix reopening plans. The idea of converting the facility into splash pad or for some other use has been suggested by some officials.

Residents who attend the special meeting will be given an overview of the pool's history and the issues they're facing today. Anyone who provides feedback will be given a free pass to Adventure Island Pool at the Edward Schock Centre of Elgin.

The March meeting will allow the city to gather more community input on "what they want the aquatics to look like," Cumpata said. "There are such strong opinions on what people want to see at Lords Park."

Among the other things on the list of recommendations is the creation of a food truck area in Festival Park with nearby seating. The city had planned to phase in such amenities when the park opened in the mid-2000s but plans were put on hold when the country went into a recession and housing market collapsed, said Barb Keselica, assistant parks and recreation director.

Blue said they're also proposing six enclosed pickleball courts, a new playground and an oak savanna restoration at Drake Field, new baseball fields and a central plaza that connects to the river at Elgin Shores and an expansion of Elgin Sports Complex with new artificial turf athletic fields.

Keselica said they want to offer as many of the amenities as possible, and all public feedback is "music to our ears."

Among the meeting attendees was east side resident Katrina Neal, who said her response to the revised master plan so far is it "misses the heart of Elgin."

"I feel there are areas of opportunity for things that will appeal to young people, aged zero to 17," Neal said. But not enough has been done to reach out to families and youth groups to see if there's a need for more things like basketball courts and soccer fields, she said.

That said, she liked the changes planned for Festival Park, especially creating a designated area for food trucks.

“The food trucks bring the festivals, and the festivals bring the people. I think it’s a good thing to bring people downtown,” Neal said.

The next step in the planning process, Cumpata said, is having the consultants analyze the feedback and include suggestions in the plan. Residents will have another opportunity to provide comments before the plan is submitted to the Elgin council, possibly in May, she said.

“You have a whole lot of variables and ideas. It’s like putting the pieces of a puzzle together,” she said.

– The Daily Herald –

South Elgin rallies to beat Larkin, wins 2nd straight regional crown

Feb. 16, 2023

By Craig Brueske

Overcoming adversity is a little easier when you have experience on your side. After a regular season filled with injuries, **South Elgin**'s girls basketball team had to overcome a halftime deficit in Thursday night's Class 4A regional championship clash with Upstate Eight Conference rival **Larkin** (17-14).

Senior Raina Yang scored 15 of her game-high 19 points in the second half, as the Storm (16-16) rallied for a 47-43 victory over the Royals.

South Elgin, which became the first boys or girls basketball team in school history to capture back-to-back regional titles, advances to Tuesday's Hampshire sectional semifinals against Friday's Huntley-Rockford Guilford winner.

"We've been through so much adversity this year," said **Storm** coach Dan Mandernack, whose team opened the season with senior veterans Zoie Lewis and Ariana Lopez sidelined with ankle injuries.

"We haven't had the whole group together often. We just kept saying, 'keep grinding, keep grinding.' They deserve this."

Larkin, led by senior center Baylei Johnson (15 points, 14 rebounds, 3 steals), grabbed a 37-36 lead in the opening minute of the fourth quarter on Johnson's 3-point play.

From there, the teams traded baskets, with **Larkin** freshman Mia Carter (7 points, 5 rebounds, 3 steals) tying the score at 41-all on a driving layup with 5:26 remaining.

Yang, who surpassed the 1,000-point mark for her career earlier in the season, hit a runner in the paint to give **South Elgin** the lead for good at 43-41 with 3:51 left. Layups from Lewis (6 points, 10 rebounds, 4 steals) and Yang extended **South Elgin's** lead to 47-41 with 1:45 remaining, and the Storm defense helped secure the win with a pair of steals down the stretch.

"I just tried to make a difference and get to the basket more," said Yang, who tallied 9 points during her team's 14-8 third-quarter surge.

"She's so smart," Mandernack said of Yang. "She's been with us for four years. She's our leader. She's our quarterback. She's our everything.

"Zoie's layup and Raina's layup -- those are seniors refusing to lose. They've been on the big stage before and that really showed."

Fellow seniors Caitlyn Tolentino and Chloe Kmiec chipped in with 13 and 9 points, respectively, for the Storm.

"These seniors really deserve it," said Mandernack. "Our schedule was brutal this season. It helped prepare us for this tonight."

Freshmen Sanaii McPherson and Yesenia Escobar added 9 and 8 points, respectively for the Royals, who were searching for their first regional crown since 2004.

"I think one of the biggest reasons they came out on top was that they've got experience in these types of games," said Larkin coach Stephen Knapp. "They have three senior guards who really played well, and we have three or four freshmen who haven't been in this situation.

"Plus, they're playing on their home court. I think we played them about as well as could play them tonight. It could've been ours but I think we were three or four minutes short."

– The Beacon News –
Unsung guard Jacob Piceno turns up defense again for Marmion in big win over Bartlett. His

impact? ‘It’s huge.’

Feb. 16, 2023

Aurora Beacon News

By Rick Armstrong



Marmion’s Jacob Piceno (5) puts up a shot over Bartlett’s Josh Taylor (12) during a nonconference game on Wednesday, Feb. 15, 2023. (Mike Mantucca / The Beacon-News)

Jacob Piceno flies below most radars for Marmion, but his contributions don’t go unnoticed.

Hardly.

When it comes to the wow factor, the 6-foot-1 guard is often overshadowed by fellow senior starters Collin Wainscott, Jabe Haith and Trevon Roots, who check in at 6-1, 6-2 and 6-6, respectively.

“Obviously, they’re the main scorers on the team,” Piceno said. “I had to find my way to help the team and contribute. I go out and play like it’s my last game.

“Coach (Joe Piekarz) talks about how we have to give more, and that’s my mentality. Playing defense is my main strength — finding open teammates, just hustling and playing as hard as I can.”



Marmion's Jabe Haith (2) blocks a shot by Bartlett's Nathan Scearce (5) during a nonconference game on Wednesday, Feb. 15, 2023. (Mike Mantucca / The Beacon-News)

Marmion's big three were at it on the offensive end Wednesday night, scoring 18 points apiece in an 84-64 nonconference victory over **Bartlett** at home that was the final tuneup for the playoffs.

"When we have scoring balance like that, we're pretty tough," Piekarcz said.

Roots had eight assists, seven rebounds and five blocked shots. Wainscott, honored before the game for topping 1,000 career points, added eight rebounds and four assists. Haith had six rebounds and a pair of steals.

Their defense was also a factor in the frenetic-paced game against **Bartlett** (19-12), with Piceno drawing 6-2 senior guard Kelton McEwen.

The Cadets led by 14 points at halftime, limiting the Hawks to shooting 28% (10 of 36) while connecting at 58% (18 of 31).

The lead was 64-46 after three quarters, and a 15-2 spurt to open the fourth quarter sealed the win for Marmion (19-11).



Marmion's Jacob Piceno (5) drives past Bartlett's Colin Taylor (23) during a nonconference game on Wednesday, Feb. 15, 2023. (Mike Mantucca / The Beacon-News)

Piceno scored all nine of his points in the first half, and with help from his friends, helped limit McEwen to five points while shooting 1 of 9 in that span.

“Kelton McEwen is one of the best guards in the area, and the defensive effort Jacob put on was unbelievable,” Piekarcz said. “He’s been doing that the entire year.

“That’s just what Jacob does. He loves to do it and does it without complaining or asking for anything.”

Junior guard Nathan Scarce scored 14 points, senior guard Keegan Kunzer added 13 and McEwen finished with 10 for **Bartlett**, which played the night before and beat Glenbard East 69-57.

“They defend well, they get after it,” Bartlett coach Jim Wolfsmith said of Marmion.

“They’re athletic in the lane, don’t give you a lot of driving lanes and you saw the pace they play.

“Not every team can play at that pace.”



Marmion's Collin Wainscott (3) stands out in a crowd of Bartlett defenders as he puts up a shot in a nonconference game on Wednesday, Feb. 15, 2023. (Mike Mantucca / The Beacon-News)

It's why Wolfsmith and Piekarz agreed to the series starting last year and plan to continue.

"It's a great game for both of us to end the season," Piekarz said.

Piceno agreed with his coach that the Cadets used a team effort on defense.

"We had a plan, trying to stop (McEwen) early," Piceno said. "Jabe (Haith) and I were switching at times and I was getting good help side (support)."

Knowing a shot blocker like Roots has his back also helps, according to Piceno.

"Jacob doesn't get a lot of credit, but he's a big factor on the team," Wainscott said. "His defense is outstanding. He's always guarding the best player on the other team.

"You don't want to sleep on his shooting ability either. He shoots really well."



Marmion's Jacob Piceno, left, scoops up a shot on a drive to the basket against Bartlett's Keegan Kunzer, center, and Kelton McEwen during a nonconference game on Wednesday, Feb. 15, 2023. (Mike Mantucca / The Beacon-News)

The Hawks are seeded eighth in the Class 4A **Bartlett** Sectional and open at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday against ninth-seeded Batavia at the Addison Trail Regional.

Marmion is seeded second in the Class 3A Kaneland Regional and opens at 6 p.m. Wednesday against the winner of Saturday's quarterfinal between the eighth and ninth seeds, Plano and IMSA.

The Cadets are focused on reaching 20 wins. Marmion hasn't won that many in 47 years, since the 1975-76 team coached by Jim Newport went 24-6 and went to state in Class A.

"It's huge," Piekarz said. "These kids want to make a name for themselves here."

– The Beacon News –

Feb. 16, 2023

Aurora Beacon News

By Paul Johnson

Raina Yang changes up things as South Elgin tops Larkin to repeat as regional champions. 'She's our everything.'



South Elgin's Madison Hunt (3), Caitlyn Tolentino (1), Caroline Croft (11), Raina Yang (12), Zoie Lewis (24), Chloe Kmiec (4), Jenna Jurcy (21) and Ariana Lopez (13) celebrate beat Larkin in the Class 4A South Elgin Regional championship game on Thursday, Feb. 16, 2023. (H. Rick Bamman / The Beacon-News)

South Elgin senior Raina Yang prides herself on being a pass-first guard.

But during a season that saw the **Storm** ravaged by injuries, Yang started to look for her shot more often. That new skill came in handy Thursday night against Larkin.

“There needed to be a change because things weren’t working,” Yang said. “I tried to create for my own and get to the hoop. I think I could have penetrated earlier in the game.

“I kind of waited for the fourth quarter.”



South Elgin's Raina Yang (12) reacts in the closing seconds of the fourth quarter against Larkin during the Class 4A South Elgin Regional championship game on Thursday, Feb. 16, 2023. (H. Rick Bamman / The Beacon-News)

It turned out Yang was right on time.

Yang earned the lead twice in the fourth quarter on creative drives to the basket as the host **Storm** held on for a 47-43 victory in the Class 4A **South Elgin** Regional championship game.

Yang led all scorers with 19 points and Caitlyn Tolentino added 13 for **South Elgin** (16-16), which won back-to-back regional titles for the first time in program history.

Baylei Johnson had 15 points and 11 rebounds and Sanai McPherson notched nine points and 10 rebounds for **Larkin** (17-14).

“Shots weren’t falling and she said, ‘Coach, I can get to the rim,’” **South Elgin** coach Dan Mandernack said of Yang. “I said, ‘Any time, kid.’”

“She made one at the beginning of the fourth and I said, ‘Just keep doing your thing.’”



South Elgin's Ariana Lopez (13) tips the ball away from Larkin's Mia Carter (0) in the third quarter of the Class 4A South Elgin Regional championship game on Thursday, Feb. 16, 2023. (H. Rick Bamman / The Beacon-News)

Yang scored only four points in the first half. The **Storm** also shot 5-for-26 from 3-point range, so Yang knew an adjustment needed to be made.

She scored 15 of **South Elgin's** final 20 points to help the **Storm** survive.

“I saw that we were down and it was a close game so I tried to make a difference and get to the basket more,” Yang said.

Considering the fact she's no stranger to games like this, especially since the Storm made a run last season to the sectional championship game, Mandernack knew Yang had things in control.

"She's so smart," Mandernack said. "She's our quarterback. She's our leader. She's our everything."

"She's pass-first. That makes it even more amazing that she got to 1,000 (career) points. She's very unselfish."



South Elgin's Madison Hunt (3) steals the ball away from Larkin's Baylei Johnson (32) during the Class 4A South Elgin Regional championship game on Thursday, Feb. 16, 2023. (H. Rick Bamman / The Beacon-News)

Larkin relied on Johnson, a senior center and the tallest girl on the court, to stay in the game.

Johnson battled foul trouble in the first half but was a force in the second half. She gave the **Royals** a 37-36 lead early in the fourth and forced a 39-39 tie with another basket.

Fittingly, the player who had over 1,000 career points and rebounds ended her career with another double-double.

"I can't say anything more about Baylei," **Larkin** coach Stephen Knapp said. "It really hurt us she was out for five or six minutes in the first half. She played smarter in the second half. We needed her in at all times."

Knapp looked across the court at **South Elgin**'s three senior guards, envisioning what it may look like when his young guards learn from Thursday's experience.



South Elgin's Raina Yang (12) gets set to shoot against Larkin during the Class 4A South Elgin Regional championship game on Thursday, Feb. 16, 2023. (H. Rick Bamman / The Beacon-News)

“Champions have to fail first to learn how to be a champion,” Knapp said. “To be honest, I don’t think it could have gone any better outside of winning.

“We were in that game. I thought we had it.”

The season for **South Elgin**, meanwhile, began with heightened expectations after the **Storm** went further in the postseason than any team in program history.

A string of injuries and tough losses added to the pressure.

It all paid off Thursday.

“It was definitely a struggle,” Yang said. “We had a lot of injuries. Thankfully, we recovered, and they were able to come back and we were able to put the team back together.”

– The Beacon News –

Surprised by success, West Aurora’s Brittney Moran keeps moving along. Next up? State. ‘I never thought I’d here.’

Feb. 16, 2023

Aurora Beacon News

By Patrick Z. McGavin

Competition at the top: The starting weight class for the girls is 100 pounds, and it will have a distinctly local flavor at state.

East Aurora sophomore Kameyah Young (29-2) defeated Joliet Central's Chloe Wong in the championship match at the Geneseo Sectional.

Bartlett sophomore Emma Engels (14-1) captured the sectional title at Schaumburg. Batavia freshman Lily Enos finished third.

Enos (40-11) exacted her own measure of revenge in qualifying for state. After losing to Montini's Kat Bell in the quarterfinal, she won three straight consolation matches.

Enos then defeated Bell 11-7 in the third-place match.

Best of both worlds: Sandwich junior Ashlyn Strenz lost a tough decision against Joliet Central's Eliana Paramo for the 115-pound title at Geneseo.

Strenz (22-14) has a wide range of experience, toggling back and forth between the boys and girls programs. She wrestled at 113 for several high profile boys tournaments, including in December at the Plano Reaper Classic.

Down and up: **Larkin's** Maria Ferrer improved her conditioning to drop down a weight class.

After finishing fourth last year at 170 pounds, Ferrer (27-5) made a strong showing as a senior in the sectional at Schaumburg by reaching the finals at 155.

To read the full article and see all the pictures click [here](#).