

## Press Clippings 1/28/2018

---Courier News--- 1/28 /18

### Students jam with Grams

ESO director coaches Larkin musicians, encourages love of music

BY RAFAEL GUERRERO



Elgin Symphony Orchestra director Andrew Grams works with more than 60 Larkin High School orchestra students Wednesday. (Rafael Guerrero/Courier-News )

Andrew Grams acknowledged what was obvious to many on Wednesday morning: the 8:30 a.m. start time was perhaps too early for orchestra rehearsal.

“It’s early for me. I like to sleep in,” the director of the Elgin Symphony Orchestra told more than 60 Larkin High School orchestra students on the school stage with him, his cup of coffee only a few feet away.

It was the first time Grams has conducted a clinic for high school orchestra students. He helped the students with pieces they are set to perform for an upcoming recital.

The Elgin Symphony Orchestra has long offered educational opportunities for local students, such as providing youth concerts, traveling ensembles, family concerts at Gail Borden Public Library and master classes. According to the orchestra, its outreach programs reach more than 25,000 students per season.

And while the orchestra does do outreach to the area schools, it was the first time Grams has ever served as a guest conductor for an entire orchestra of young musicians. Grams said he will likely continue doing such clinics, possibly with other nearby school districts.

Students were eagerly anticipating Grams’ appearance, Larkin orchestra director Tom Weyland said.

“(Guest conductors) can lend a different area of excitement,” he said. “When you have two people singing, for instance, they’re probably not going to sing a song the same.”

Indeed, Grams changed up the pace for the two pieces. At one point, he asked the cellists to use more of their bows, to not limit themselves to only a fraction of it.

“Give me your best Yo-Yo Ma impression,” he joked, referring to the world-famous cellist.

“You’re a shrieking whale,” he shouted at one point, eliciting some laughter.

“I want them to go play, make sound, not worry if it’s not perfect,” Grams said.

Teenagers need encouragement, and he said he hoped he could help them with that. He also wanted them to feel comfortable.

“Don’t be embarrassed. You’re already onstage,” Grams told the students, noting how others would love to be in their place and have their skills.

Perhaps most important of all, he wanted them to continue to “cultivate appreciation and love” for playing music, he said. Recruiting future Elgin Symphony Orchestra players was not his objective, Grams said.

“I want them to keep doing what they’re doing,” he said.

---Courier News--- 1/28 /18

## **Schools finally get to look at '16 science test scores**

State officials point to budget impasse for results' delays

BY RAFAEL GUERRERO

Science test scores have finally been unveiled for public schools in the Elgin area and around the state, almost two years after the assessments were administered. A number of area districts' students did not reach state proficiency standards on the Illinois Science Assessment, but state averages were exceeded in other districts.

The unusual delay in the scoring and publishing of the data was largely due to the two-year budget impasse, state officials said.

Locally, the data are still being processed, with **School District U46** spokeswoman Mary Fergus saying officials have contacted the Illinois State Board of Education for updates on when scores would be available.

“Based on understanding the time frame, we continued to use other data to guide our decisions in supporting our students,” she said.

“When we don’t receive test scores in a timely manner, it impacts us on how we should change instruction or how to help our students achieve,” said Carol Smith, spokeswoman for St. Charles School District 303. “We would obviously like the scores to be out on time.”

School District 300 officials declined to comment.

In a news release issued Wednesday, Illinois State Board of Education officials said the creation and implementation of a new assessment, combined with two years of no state budget, severely delayed conducting, scoring and reporting the scores from the 2016 Illinois Science Assessment.

That was the assessment’s debut as public schools shifted toward following the Next Generation Science Standards. The untimed test for fifth- and eighth-graders, as well as high school biology students, is designed to take students about an hour to finish.

“Illinois is ahead of the curve in including science in our balanced accountability indicators,” State Superintendent of Education Tony Smith said in a written statement. “We sincerely appreciate Illinois’ educators and administrators for helping to make each year of the science assessment more successful than the last. While the timeline for releasing the scores has been unacceptable, we have received positive feedback on the test itself.”

Locally, the percentage of students achieving proficiency varied. Average scores on the high school tests in the area's two largest school districts — **U46** and 300 — were below the state average. Almost 32 percent of **U46** high school test-takers were proficient, while just more than 37 percent were proficient in D300 high schools. The state average proficiency rate was just under 41 percent.

About 61 percent of test-takers at Burlington Central High School in Central School District 301 were proficient in science, according to the data. Meanwhile, close to 50 percent of those tested at St. Charles School District 303's high school met or exceeded proficiency.

Among fifth-graders, almost 48 percent of U46 students achieved proficiency, which is below the state average of just under 58 percent. Just under 70 percent of fifth-grade students in D300 met proficiency, above the state average. Also above the state average were the average proficiency rates for fifth-grade students in District 301 and District 303, at about 82 percent and 76 percent, respectively.

At U46, schools have been updating science materials for grades one through eight as well as for high school biology, physics and chemistry. Fergus said district leaders recognized the need to update resources to be aligned with Next Generation Science Standards, which “emphasizes not just mastery of knowledge but application.” Next Generation Science Standards have been adopted by 19 states, including Illinois, and the District of Columbia.

“Our mission is to not just improve test scores in science,” Fergus said. “We are working to awaken our students’ passion for science, its connection to their world and an overall love of learning and discovery.”

In addition to using the new science resources, U46 educators are developing districtwide science assessments to be implemented within the next two years, she said.

State officials said scores from last school year's science assessments will be unveiled in February. Schools cannot compare year-to-year changes in proficiency rates until last year's results are unveiled.

---Courier News--- 1/28 /18

## **Point taken: A classroom controversy, a matter of faith**

BY LINDA MCDANIEL-HALE



A homework assignment about religion has stirred controversy in School District U46. (rafael guerrero/Courier-News)

A homework assignment for some **School District U46** sixth-graders involving three major religions prompted dozens of people to turn out for the last school board meeting.

The assignment included an article in which the author asked if even though Christians, Jews and Muslims showed great differences in their beliefs, all three religions basically

worship the same God. The students were given a series of questions to answer on the topic.

A school board member posted a strong objection on social media, saying she thought the author was wrong in his assumption about different religions all believing in the same God.

Fox Valley resident Lisa Snyder believes that Christians, Jews, and Muslims definitely do not believe in the same God. And an Elgin resident who didn't want her name used said, "The Jewish religion follows the teachings in the Old Testament, while Christians follow the New Testament and Muslims follow the Quran. All of these religions have basic differences in how they view God."

The Founding Fathers of the United States, concerned about freedom of religion, included this in the Constitution: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."

It is a fundamental right that is guaranteed to all those residing in this country. We are clearly allowed to worship as we see fit. Any discussion about our religious beliefs is clearly acceptable.

However, there is also a division between church and state. Prayer is no longer allowed in public schools and groups such as the ACLU want the word "God" removed from the Pledge of Allegiance. Where you stand on these issues is a right protected under our Constitution.

Assignments asking students to answer questions about similarities in three main religions is best left out of the public schools to avoid serious differences in opinions reaching the boiling point.

---Daily Herald--- 1/28 /18

## **Elgin mourning loss of community leader Shales**

BY SUSAN SARKAUSKAS

The Elgin community is mourning the death of Jack Shales, a longtime leader who believed we are brought in to this world to aid other people.

"You always have time to help other people," Shales said in 2013 as he prepared to celebrate his 60th year of volunteering for the [United Way of Elgin](#).

Shales, who had recently been hospitalized after a heart attack, died Saturday morning.

"He's an icon in our community," Elgin Mayor David Kaptain said. Shales and his wife, Marlene, were devoted to the town.

"I think that all of us can use them as role models," Kaptain said.

Shales' longest-running gig was with the United Way, which began when he was assigned to collect donations from fellow employees at Illinois Hydraulic Construction Co. in 1954.

He never stopped, even while founding the construction company Seagren/Shales in 1983 (it is now Shales McNutt Construction.)

"I started with my employees and got them to contribute. Being in construction, I'd hit the other contractors and get them to make contributions," Shales told the Daily Herald in a 2013 interview.

"It made it more convenient for everyone to give that way."

The United Way made him a lifetime director of the group, and named the "Spirit of Community" award for him in 2004.

In 2013, the city of Elgin gave him its "Extra Mile Hero" award.

Shales was also tasked with getting other people to volunteer, Kaptain said, particularly because of his good sense of humor.

"He liked to find volunteers," Kaptain said.

Shales served on the boards of the Salvation Army, and the Gail Borden Public Library Foundation, and emceed Easter Seals telethons.

"Everybody, when they see me coming, they put their hands in their pockets. They're afraid I'm going to pick their pockets," he joked.

Shales, who served in the Marine Corps, is survived by Marlene, a former Elgin City Council member. The city honored the duo, who were 1949 graduates of **Elgin High School**, with an Image Award in 2011 for their community service, which that year included sponsoring the Community Thanksgiving Luncheon and posing as the king and queen of the library's Royal Feast to raise money for a teen center.

No funeral arrangements have been announced.

---Daily Herald--- 1/28/18

## **Supporting women**

**Join The Long Red Line event at ECC Feb. 14**

SUBMITTED BY ELGIN COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Elgin Community College will host "The Long Red Line," a community effort to support One Billion Rising, a global movement to end rape, violence and oppression against women, on Wednesday, Feb. 14.

The annual event will be 10 to 11:30 a.m. in the Building B Jobe Lounge.

The accompanying art exhibit opening and reception will take place on Tuesday, Jan. 30 from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. starting in the Building C Library Gallery. Both events will take place at 1700 Spartan Drive, Elgin. Admission is free and open to the public.

Now in its sixth year, "The Long Red Line" is a visual demonstration of solidarity where community members are invited to bring a red scarf or piece of fabric that will be held together by participants -- forming one long red line.

People have been creating scarlet scarves for "The Long Red Line" since fall 2013.

Vicki Rae Harder-Thorne, committee chair, event speaker and survivor, brought the idea to the Elgin committee with the notion that scarves tend to represent self-restriction and silence but when held together can symbolize freedom and community members' connection to one another.

The color red was chosen because of its association with blood, vitality, passion, courage, sexuality and aggression.

"I've personally found that publicly sharing my story of survival has been powerful in breaking the chain of shame and guilt; helping recover dignity, courage and value as a human, and giving hope to others who may still suffer in silence," Harder-Thorne said.

Approximately 350 people attended last year's event.

In addition to the forming of the long red line, this year's event will feature guest speakers: Maureen Manning, director of client services at the Community Crisis Center in Elgin; Vicki Rae Harder-Thorne, survivor, vocal advocate, founding member and current chair of Elgin's One Billion Rising event; Elgin Police Chief Jeff Swoboda; Elisa Lara, community outreach nurse coordinator at the Visiting Nurse Association of Elgin; Shla George, current ECC student, a published poet and performer; Traci O'Neal Ellis, executive director of human resources at the Illinois Math and Science Academy in Aurora, **Elgin Area School District U-46** board member and 2018 recipient of the Martin Luther King Jr. Humanitarian Award from the City of Elgin Human Relations Commission; Katie Shaw Thompson, pastor of the Highland Avenue Church of the Brethren; and Denise Tracy, Elgin Police Department chaplain.

"The annual Long Red Line event is an important day for ECC and the Elgin community," said Megan Highland, ECC Student Life coordinator and Long Red Line committee member. "It serves as a safe place for students, employees and community members to feel comfortable sharing their story and empowered to light a pathway to healing for themselves and others."

To further raise awareness of the prevalence of sexual harassment and sexual assault, a juried art exhibit is being curated this year. ECC students, alumni and residents were invited to submit their original work that aligned with the current theme: "Rise. Resist. Revolt."

Nineteen pieces of chosen artwork will be displayed in the Renner Library Hallway Gallery in Building C from Jan. 24 to Feb. 28. Awards will be given during the art exhibit opening and reception on Jan. 30.

The reception is an opportunity for guests to view the accepted artwork, meet the artists and hear from Lisa Siders Kenney, a Washington-based multimedia artist whose 13-year-old daughter Esme was assaulted and killed in March 2009.

Siders' talk, "Art: The Sacred Power of Healing" will showcase two quilts; one that she made to celebrate her daughter's birth and the other to memorialize Esme's death. Both quilts will be on display as part of ECC's art exhibit.

"The Long Red Line" committee envisioned the art exhibit as an opportunity to give a voice to survivors who may struggle to speak of their truth using words. "Art can empower women to heal through the visual representation of sharing their stories and expressing their pain," said Harder-Thorne. "Many people find that it's easier to connect with art than the spoken word, which helps support healing and strengthens our connection with one another."

"The Long Red Line" is sponsored by the ECC Student Life Office, the Community Crisis Center, Fox Valley Citizens for Peace and Justice, Coalition of Elgin Religious Leaders, Elgin YWCA, Ecker Center for Mental Health, American Association of University Women, and the Open Door Health Center of Illinois.

For more information about the event, contact Megan Highland, ECC Student Life Coordinator, at (847) 214-7659 or mhighland@elgin.edu.

## **SPORTS SECTION**

---Daily Herald--- 1/28/18

### **Boys Basketball: Big to have Ben back**

Tompson score game-high 22 as Bartlett rallies past South Elgin

BY PAUL JOHNSON



Bartlett's Austin Gates takes a shot during the third quarter of Friday's game at South Elgin. (Brian O'Mahoney/Courier-News Photos)

During a Dec. 2 game, senior guard Ben Tompson went down with a nasty ankle injury for Bartlett. It forced him to watch a Dec. 15 home loss to South Elgin from the bench.

He had Friday night's rematch circled on his calendar.

Tompson played his first full game since that injury and scored a game-high 22 points, helping the Hawks come back for a 61-56 Upstate Eight Valley win.

"This was the goal from the beginning, to get back for this game," Tompson said. "Especially after they beat us at our place.

"Six weeks ago, I had a little bit of a different mindset. I thought I would be back in mid-February and working my way back for the playoffs. It's good to be back."

Tompson, who missed 12 games, also was on the bench at the start of Friday's game. He saw South Elgin (13-7, 3-3) take an early 10-0 lead.

Tompson, who played less than 10 minutes in the past two games as he worked his way back, hit a 3-pointer late in the first quarter for his first basket since the injury. He shot 7-for-8 from the line to close the first half as Bartlett (11-9, 4-2) inched within 28-25.

"The feeling of the ball going in was big for Ben, and that gave him the confidence to drive to the basket and finish," South Elgin coach Brett Johnson said. "I think with the skills that he has — he's such a good player — that gave him the confidence that he can do it while not 100 percent."

Senior guard Tomas Vikonis, one of the teammates who kept the Hawks afloat while Tompson was out, turned into the spark again as Bartlett finally grabbed the lead late in the third quarter.

Vikonis scored nine of his 20 points in the third, including a driving layup in the final minute that gave the Hawks a 45-44 lead. They never trailed again, although the lead was never comfortable.

Junior Drake Montgomery led South Elgin with 16 points. Vincent Miskiewicz added 11.

"We have a whole bunch of guys who can play, and Tomas has taken a lot of that on himself in the time that Ben was out," Bartlett coach Jim Wolfsmith said. "I thought he did a great job. He came out and did what a captain should do. He led the team."

Tompson put the game on ice, scoring 10 points in the fourth to fend off the Storm.

"It's great to get a kid like Ben back," Wolfsmith said. "He does so many things well. He's still not quite in game condition. I like the way he found a way back into the flow. We almost looked like he was never gone in terms of the flow of the game."

Paul Johnson is a freelance reporter for The Courier-News.

---Courier News--- 1/28/18

## **Girls Basketball: Noesen is no nonsense**

Junior steps up, scores 13 points, as Bartlett surges past South Elgin

BY PAUL JOHNSON



Bartlett's Teagan Noesen shoots a layup during the third quarter of Friday's game at South Elgin. (Brian O'Mahoney/The Courier-News)

Bartlett coach Brad Hunt calls Teagan Noesen "one of my unsung heroes."

Noesen got plenty of recognition in Friday's 50-34 Upstate Eight Valley win at rival South Elgin.

The junior guard poured in 13 points on 5-for-7 shooting, including a 3-pointer at the end of the first half that allowed the Hawks to pull away from South Elgin and sweep the season series.

"We worked on making the extra pass and working as a team on offense," Noesen said. "That really helps when my teammates and I are all working together. Luckily, it was me tonight that knocked some shots down."

Noesen added six rebounds and solid defense as part of her night's work.

"I generally put her on the other team's best player," Hunt said. "(Friday) she had the duty of guarding (sophomore Megan) McClure and I thought she did an outstanding job. We know McClure is a great ballplayer. Then, in addition to that, I ask her to knock down a couple of threes a game. She's just in a zone right now.

"Teams can't just guard Kayla (Hare) anymore. I have a few other girls who can knock down some shots. Teagan is definitely one of those girls who teams have to pay attention to."

Bartlett (15-9, 7-0) got off to a sluggish start, leading only 17-15 midway through the second quarter. A pair of 3-pointers from Noesen down the stretch, including one in the final seconds, helped Bartlett take a 24-18 lead into halftime.

"That was very big," Noesen said. "My teammates and I just work on hitting who is hot right now, so my teammates did a good job of finding me and I just nailed it."

The Hawks then opened the second half on a 14-2 spurt, capped by another 3-pointer from Noesen, to put the game away. Hare started the rally with a layup off of a steal and a 3-pointer, followed by six straight points from freshman Alexis Sinclair.

Hare led all scorers with 16 points. Freshman Justina Hernandez added 10 off the bench.

South Elgin (10-11, 4-3) was paced by McClure's 15 points.

Storm coach Dan Mandernack lamented some missed opportunities that set the tone for Bartlett's comeback from an early 10-4 deficit.

"Little things like that, when you're struggling to score, you feel that those are missed opportunities that are going to come back to haunt you, and they did," Mandernack said. "We were down two and they hit a three at the end of the half, gave them great momentum going into halftime."