

# Press Clippings Through April 28, 2025

- ABC 7 -

## Beloved Hoffman Estates teacher in desperate need of 2nd kidney transplant: 'I want to be here'

By: Cate Cauguiran

Date: April 22, 2025



Katie Pappas, who teaches at Timber Trails Elementary School in Hoffman Estates, Illinois, is in desperate need of a second kidney donation.

*To watch the story, please click [here](#).*

HOFFMAN ESTATES, Ill. (WLS) -- Katie Pappas' doctors told her, not only does she need another kidney donation after having gone through transplant surgery before, but she might not have the time to wait.

Now, her community in Hoffman Estates is fighting to save her life, and hopefully, in the process, they will help save others.

"They're so empathetic. They're so compassionate," Pappas said.

The connection between Pappas and her students is a bond beyond the classroom.

"You know when a person comes into the room and just lights up the whole room? That's how she is," said former student Janice Poe.

The 40-year-old Timber Trails Elementary School health teacher spends her days bringing laughter and life to her students.

"She is, like, the best teacher; She's so kind," said current student Liana Kolovos.

"Even if she's having a bad day, she won't let that show in class," said current student Meera Sharma.

Pappas spends her nights hooked up to a dialysis machine to help save her own life after learning, for a second time, that she is in kidney failure.

"It started at the very beginning of 2024. I went for some biopsies that did not go well, and it was steady decline. I knew where it was going," Pappas said.

A doctor told Pappas, after already having undergone a kidney transplant from a deceased donor years ago, she would need another one, and fast.

"They said with everything your body has been through, you've already had a transplant, you don't have seven years to wait. And you need to find a living donor," Pappas said.

When her students and school found out, they stepped up, organizing a fundraiser and awareness campaign last December.

But their efforts did not stop there.

One of Pappas' former students took it a step further by registering to be a donor in hopes that she could be a match for her.

"She's done so much for me that this is just a small gift that I would be able to give to her, if they allow me to give it to her," Poe said.

"Hearing her say to me, 'What do you mean? Why would I question that? I am where I am because of you.' Wow," Pappas said.

"I am beyond lucky. Even though all these things happened, I have my family that has my back. I have firmer students that have my back," Pappas said.

And they want her here.

"And I want to be here. And I want to be here," Pappas said.

If you like to help Pappas or learn more about what it takes to be a registered kidney donor you can [click here](#) and enter her name when prompted.

**- CBS News -**

## **Elgin breaks ground on new school as District U-46 moves to "true" middle school model**

**By: Sara Tenenbaum**

**Date: April 22, 2025**



*To listen to the story, please click [here](#).*

Construction is officially starting on a new middle school in northwest suburban Elgin, Illinois.

School District U-46 is moving to a "true" middle school model for sixth, seventh and eighth grade students and will retire some of its oldest buildings when the construction of the new school is complete.

The district serves students in Elgin, Bartlett, Hanover Park, South Elgin, Streamwood and Wayne as well as portions of Carol Stream, Hoffman Estates, St. Charles, Schaumburg and West Chicago.

The groundbreaking Tuesday was at a site near Rohrssen Road and Cardinal Drive that will eventually see a 193,000 square foot middle school. Two previous groundbreakings were held for a 46,000 square foot addition to Kenyon Woods Middle School and a 53,000 square foot addition to Kimball Middle School.

# **- Chicago Tribune/ The Courier News - Elgin News Digest: East Dundee buys downtown gravel lot for community event use; Thriving After 55 Resource Fair being held Friday at ECC**

**By: Mike Danahey**

**Date: April 24, 2025**

## **Three U-46 student named National Merit Scholarship finalists**

Three School District U-46 students who are seniors at Bartlett High School have been named finalists in the 70th annual National Merit Scholarship program.

Kyle Depakakibo, Frederick Lorek and Nina Mangriotis will compete for about 6,800 scholarships worth nearly \$26 million, according to a U-46 news release. Winners will be named later this spring.

The three placed among the top 1% of juniors nationwide who took the 2023 PSAT, which serves as the initial screening. They advanced to the finals based on their academic record, participation in school and community activities, leadership abilities, employment, and honors and awards received, a news release said.

Depakakibo plans to major in nuclear, plasma and radiological engineering at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Frederick wants to study biomedical engineering on a pre-med track at the University of Texas in Dallas.

# **- Daily Herald -**

## **Boys basketball: Carter steps down after 16 seasons, state trip at Larkin**

**By: Craig Brueske**

**Date: April 24, 2025**



Deryn Carter recently stepped down after 16 seasons at his alma mater Larkin where he coached the Royals to their first state berth in 2018 and 240 wins.

Change is inevitable in sports, something Deryn Carter knows all too well.

Carter, who guided Larkin High School's boys basketball team to new heights over the course of his 16-year tenure, announced his resignation as head coach last week.

"It was just time," said Carter, who helped lead the Royals to a 4th-place Class 4A state finish in 2017-2018. "I think I have known for a little while, but you fight that urge and keep grinding.

"I have had the privilege of being the head coach at Larkin for 16 years. My wife, Claudia, has been so supportive over the years. We succeeded at making it a family atmosphere. My children have been very selfless.

"When you feel like you can't give it your all, it's time to look in the mirror."

A lifelong resident of Elgin, Carter's athletic background lies deep.

His dad, Deryl, played basketball at North Central College, while his mom, Marlene, played fastpitch softball when girls high school sports were not an option.

His older sisters, Corry and Katy, were multi-sport athletes at Larkin in the 1990s, helping pave the way for Deryn.

“I come from a basketball family,” he said. “I don’t know any different. Growing up, I tried to be as good as my older sisters were. As a kid, it was doing something you love — it was easy to fall in love with sports.”

At Larkin, Carter was a 3-year varsity basketball player, earning all-Upstate Eight Conference honors during his junior and senior seasons while finishing with 1,099 career points.

Carter went on to play college basketball at 4 different schools, including St. Louis University and the University of Missouri-St. Louis, where he spent 6 years as an assistant basketball coach.

“I would say that I started to get the coaching bug my junior year in college,” said Carter. “I tried coaching at the collegiate level but it wasn’t for me.”

When the Larkin coaching job opened in 2009, Carter received the opportunity of a lifetime.

“Growing up at Larkin, it helps shape you as a person,” he said. “It is why I wanted to get back into coaching — to help kids become better people.”

According to the IHSA records, Carter won 240 games at Larkin, including 5 regional and 2 sectional championships.

The 2017-2018 team, featuring Jalen Shaw, Anthony Lynch, Pierre Black, Victor Perez, and Kindrel Morris, defeated Benet Academy, 53-45, in the supersectional to secure the school’s first downstate trip.

“That was always the goal,” said Carter, whose team placed fourth in Peoria. “It was amazing to do it for the first time with the basketball team.

“I remember during the introductions when the PA announcer said, ‘Elgin Larkin.’ I used to hate hearing it called that as a kid, but I took a lot of pride representing the west side at the state tournament.”

Led by all-state guard Damari Wheeler-Thomas and Fernando Perez, Jr., Larkin’s 2021-2022 squad went 18-0 in the Upstate Eight Conference on the way to capturing regional and sectional titles along with a school-record 31-4 mark.

Carter’s dad, Deryl, has served as an assistant coach alongside his son the past 16 seasons.

“To be able to call on him for his expertise was invaluable as a coach,” said Deryn. “My dad is still the best coach I have been around or played for.

“I have big shoes to fill now raising my kids.”

Carter's daughter, Mia, will be a senior at Larkin, where she earned all-conference basketball honors this past season. His son, Dion, is in elementary school.

"My daughter was 1 when I started coaching at Larkin," said the 44-year-old. "Time flies by."

Carter coached the Royals to 9 winning seasons, including five 20-plus win campaigns.

"I had the opportunity to coach my nephew (Mac Irvin) the past 2 years," said Carter. "As competitive as I can be, I am just as proud knowing that we did it the right way."

"It was special."

## **- Daily Herald -**

### **Softball: Aguinaga pitches Larkin past rival Elgin**

**By: Allen Oshinski**

**Date: April 22, 2025**



The ball was bouncing Larkin's way Tuesday.

Kaitlyn Neubert homered off the top of the center field fence and Jiselle Aguinaga held Elgin to 5 hits as the Royals prevailed 4-1 in Upstate Eight action at Judson College.

Maroons starter Braedyn Tetrev had held Larkin to a pair of unearned runs through 5 innings so the Royals were looking to pad the cushion for their freshman pitcher.

Neubert took care of that with a high drive that hit the plastic tubing atop the center field fence and bounced over. One out later Kenya Ventura grounded a single through the hole. She scored on Alexia Alonzo's double to right center. That was more than enough insurance for Aguinaga, who retired the Maroons in order in the seventh.

“I was due for a hit,” Neubert said. “So I just wanted to hit the ball hard.”

The pitchers dominated until the sixth. The teams traded single runs in the third. Elgin took an early lead when Abigail Mutolo’s single plated Grace Tetrev. Larkin immediately got it back when Jiselle Aguinaga reached on a dropped third strike and scored on Julissa Aguinaga’s line drive to center.

Larkin took the lead for good when Jiselle Aguinaga walked and scored on an overthrow after Yesenia Escobar beat out an infield single.

The late rally provided a mental lift for the Royals (7-8, 4-4).

“Kaitlyn had a nice bomb, and we had Alexia rip a double at the end there,” said Larkin coach Megan Johnson-Morao. “We just really started to come alive and get out of our heads a little bit.”

Jiselle Aguinaga went the distance in the circle, walking 2 and striking out 6.

Braedyn Tetrev walked just 1 and struck out 4.

“[Tetrev] was throwing strikes and they were popping them out,” said Elgin coach Monica Stockman, whose team is now 2-11, 1-5. “A lot of them were pop ups, she was letting her defense help her, and it was a team effort.”

Braedyn Tetrev hit Escobar leading off the game, then retired the next 6 batters. She struck out Jiselle Aguinaga leading off the third but the catcher couldn’t handle it cleanly and she wound up at second. Tetrev struck out the next 2 batters before Julissa Aguinaga hit a screamer just past her head into center field.

Jiselle Aguinaga faced one over the minimum through 2, helped by a double play from Julissa Aguinaga to Escobar to Ali Herrick.



## **- Chicago Tribune -**

### **After dry spell, Amber Gnutek gets back into home-run groove for South Elgin. Finally? ‘Pour everything into it.’**

**By: Rick Armstrong**

**Date: April 22, 2025**



South Elgin's Amber Gnutek (4) watches a foul ball against Larkin in the fourth inning of an Upstate Eight Conference game in South Elgin on Monday, April 21, 2025.

A relieved Amber Gnutek had to admit that this was much more like the plan she had in mind for her senior season at South Elgin.

The first month has been a little stressful for the middle infielder who splits time between second base and shortstop.

“Amber has been so hard on herself,” Storm coach Brad Reynard said. “Her average probably isn’t where she’d like it. She has hit some hard-luck outs, but the last two weeks, she’s been hitting the ball really, really hard.

“That was huge for us today. We haven’t had a ton of home runs. To get her on track is key for us to make any advancement going forward. Good things are going to happen.”

Good things happened Monday for host South Elgin in a 10-0 Upstate Eight Conference victory over Larkin with Gnutek at the forefront.

The St. Ambrose recruit set the tone right away in the first, capping a three-run inning for the Storm (11-4, 5-0) with a two-run single.

In the third, Gnutek lifted her RBI total to four for the day by hitting a two-run homer to straightaway center that left no doubt. Her second of the season, it boosted the lead in support of winning pitcher and Loyola recruit Anna Kiel to 6-0 over the Royals (6-8, 3-4).

And for Gnutek, again, it was a relief.

“I pour everything into it,” said Gnutek, who has worked with Geneva-based hitting instructor Heather Harner since her sophomore year. “All my work throughout the fall and winter was not producing the way I planned.



South Elgin's Amber Gnutek (4) fields an infield hit by Larkin's Ashley Hammond during an Upstate Eight Conference game in South Elgin on Monday, April 21, 2025.

“I had this whole vision for my senior year. It was going to be my last year and my best year. I was doing OK, but then we went to Tennessee on spring break and it all goes down. I'm trying to keep my head up, but it's hard on you when you're kind of scuffling a little bit.”

Kiel (5-3) didn't scuffle Monday, finishing with a three-hit shutout while striking out 11 and walking one in a game that ended two batters into the bottom of the sixth. That's when catcher Chloe Ricard hit a walk-off home run, also her second of the season, that hugged the left field line.

Kiel, who lowered her ERA to 0.70, had three hits to lift her batting average to a team-high .590. Gnutek's season average rose to .286 with Monday's big game, and she now has 11 RBIs.

There's work to be done, but she has time. Gnutek, who plays travel with the Dennison Silver Hawks, batted a robust .453 last season.



South Elgin coach Brad Reynard congratulates Amber Gnutek (4) after her home run against Larkin during an Upstate Eight Conference game in South Elgin on Monday, April 21, 2025.

“I feel like I was more of a consistent hitter last year with more base hits, which was still good and helped the team,” Gnutek said. “I’ve been trying to push through it.

“I’ve been working with my mental game, doing affirmations and watching my old videos.”

Reynard was happy for Monday’s power surge, which pushed his team’s home run total to six this spring.

“It felt like three to me,” Reynard said. “It’s just another weapon in our game. We’ve had teams in the past that maybe had a little more pop.

“We have a lot more slappers and we can play small ball with this team. We can beat you in a bunch of different ways.”



South Elgin’s Amber Gnutek (4) calls timeout before delivering two-run single in the first inning of an Upstate Eight Conference game in South Elgin on Monday, April 21, 2025.

Gnutek, meanwhile, looks forward to finishing strong.

“I love the high school season because I love playing with my school friends and a lot of us have been playing together since we were 8 years old,” she said. “A lot of people say high school season isn’t as competitive, but I disagree. I feel like there’s a lot more at stake.

“Travel season has a new tournament every weekend. For high school, you’re working for three months up to that one big tournament.”

The fact it's one and done just adds to that pressure.