

Press Clippings 04/26/2019

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Elgin teen is named Youth of the Year

Boys & Girls Clubs of America state winner hopes to win Midwest

By: Rafael Guerrero



Benton

Elgin High School senior Damaryan Benton joined the Boys & Girls Club of Elgin at age 6.

More than a decade later, Benton is not only still in the club but representing it when he was chosen the 2019 Illinois Youth of the Year by the Boys & Girls Clubs of America.

Benton's dedication to the program — both as a participant and a mentor to children — were among the reasons Benton won the state honor, which comes with a \$5,000 scholarship.

“When it came time to call out the winner, I was so nervous,” said Benton, 17. “You are representing your club, you want to do the best you can. When my name was called out, so many emotions ran through my head.”

The Boys & Girls Club of Elgin has given Benton so many things over the years, he said — his first sports jersey, his first ride on a roller coaster, braces for his teeth free of charge.

More importantly, it's helped him through the highs and lows of his life so far. When his father died when he was in fourth grade, causing his grades to slide, the club helped him to eventually rebound and get back on track, Benton said.

When his success at school made him a target for bullies, some of whom called him “Oreo,” he found support from the club kept him going, he said.

“Being a successful black man is not normal,” Benton said about why he thinks he was targeted.

Benton told his story about what the Boys & Girls Club has meant in his life during the speech he gave to the judges choosing the winner of the state youth award in Springfield earlier this month. He was evaluated on that as well as on his school grades; service to his local club, community and family; life goals; character; and public speaking skills.

“The Boys & Girls Club was the one place I could grow, see myself grow, and not have any labels,” Benton said.

Cathy Russell, president/CEO of the Elgin club, said she was not surprised Benton received the honor.

“He has such a charming personality, he really stands out as a leader,” Russell said. “He made me feel welcome (when I arrived six years ago). He’s willing to do anything to help. He’s very humble, yet stands out to you just by who he is.”

The Boys & Girls Clubs of America founded its Youth of the Year program in 1947, honoring participants at the local, state, regional and national levels. As a result of his win, Benton will now compete alongside other state winners July 18 for the Midwest Regional Youth of the Year in Chicago. The winner of that competition moves on to the national Youth of the Year competition in Washington, D.C., in September.

“My birthday is on July 20. Winning (the regional competition) would be the best birthday day gift ever,” Benton said.

Set to graduate this spring, Benton will attend Judson University in Elgin on a full four-year scholarship. He plans to study business administration and communications with a career goal to ultimately work in administration for a nonprofit organization.

“Through this program, I genuinely realized what my purpose in life is,” Benton said. “They helped me realize I want to give back, show that impact to kids in the future.”

City history on tour

Open Elgin shows off splendor of architectural gems

By: Rafael Guerrero



Channing Memorial Elementary School, celebrating its 50th anniversary this year, is a new addition to the Open Elgin architectural tour.

Elgin Tower, Channing Memorial Elementary School and the Wait Ross Allanson Funeral Home are among the architectural gems open for public tours Saturday as part of Open Elgin.

The free event gives people a chance to get a closer look at 27 buildings in the city, some more than a century old, that they might not otherwise get to see, said Carol Gieske, executive director of the Elgin Area Chamber and Commerce, sponsor of the self-guided tours for the last three years.

“It does give a unique perspective of Elgin’s history, a level of joy (showcasing) these buildings,” Gieske said.

One of the more prominent sites featured this year is the recently renovated Elgin Tower Building, a downtown office building restored and converted for residential use. Built in 1929, the 15-story, art deco-style building opened last year as a 44-unit apartment

building after falling into decay for decades and nearly meeting its demise at the end of a wrecking ball.

The building's ornate first-floor lobby, which normally is not open to the public, has glass entry doors flanked by Corinthian columns topped with eagle statues, Gieske said.

Channing Elementary also is making its tour debut, coinciding with the school's 50th anniversary. Channing opened in 1968 on the northwest corner of what had been a cemetery at Channing and Fulton streets.

The graveyard connection is part of the appeal, Gieske said. One marked grave remains on the Channing site, and rumors abound that the school is haunted.

The Wait Ross Allanson Funeral Home also is new to the tour. The Center Street business dates back to 1875, but its offices and funeral church were extensively remodeled in 1958. In 1923, the business took its current name, the same year the funeral home owners built the present-day funeral chapel.

"This is why we are doing Open Elgin," Gieske said. "There are so many buildings of historical benefit that are generally not available to the public. If you have an hour or two to visit one or two or five buildings, you should."

Among the returning sites are the School District U46 planetarium and observatory, the Elgin Professional Building and Elgin Academy's Laura Davidson Sears Gallery. The oldest building on tour list will be the Nancy Kimball Currier House — known to many as the "Cobblestone House" — that was built in 1846 and is undergoing renovations.

Each of the buildings on the tour will be marked by red flags, with volunteers ready to offer assistance, Gieske said. Some of the volunteers are U46 students, including 30 or so members of the Larkin High School baseball team, according to a district news release.

All but one of the buildings will be open to the public from 1 to 5 p.m. U46 planetarium and observatory hours are from 1 to 3 p.m.

While the commerce of commerce sponsors Open Elgin, the planning committee is made up of the city of Elgin, School District U46, Judson University, Elgin Area Convention and Visitors Bureau, the Downtown Neighborhood Association, Elgin History Museum, and Gail Borden Public Library.

Buildings on this year's tour

- Ackemann's Building-Third Floor, 168 E. Highland Ave.
- Burritt Building-Fifth Floor, 25 S. Grove Ave.
- Channing Elementary School, 63 S. Channing St.
- Church of the Brethren General Offices, 1451 Dundee Ave.
- Elgin City Hall-Robert Gilliam Municipal Complex, 150 Dexter Court
- Congregation Kneseth Israel, 330 Division St.
- Elgin Academy-Laura Davidson Sears Theater, 350 Park St.
- Elgin Fire Barn Museum, 533 St. Charles St.
- Elgin History Museum, 360 Park St.
- Elgin Professional Building, 164 Division St.
- Elgin Public Museum, 225 Grand Blvd.
- Elgin Tower Building (lobby only), 100 E. Chicago St.
- First Congregational Church, 256 E. Chicago St.
- First United Methodist Church, 216 E. Highland Ave.

- Scofield Mansion (Old Gail Borden Public Library), 50 N. Spring St.
- Henrietta Building (art space lofts), 51 S. Spring St.
- Imago Creative Studios, 216 Prairie St.
- Kohn Schramm Building, 13 Douglas Ave.
- Kresmery Lofts, 1 Douglas Ave.
- Lords Park Pavilion, Lords Park, 100 Oakwood Blvd.
- Nancy Kimball Cobblestone House, 302 W. Chicago St.
- Oak Crest Residence, 204 S. State St.
- Philadelphia Holiness Full Gospel Church, 76 S. Jackson St.
- Ranstead Building-Al's Cafe, 43 DuPage Court
- Senior Services Associates, 101-103 S. Grove Ave.
- U46 Planetarium and Observatory, 312 Watch St.
- Wait Ross Allanson Funeral Home, 51 Center St.

SPORTS

---The Daily Herald---04/26/2019

Lacrosse: Huntley girls, South Elgin boys surging forward

By: Gregg Voss



Huntley's girls lacrosse program had just 15 players try out in 2014. This year Huntley had 70.

After winning just 1 game a year ago, the Huntley girls lacrosse team is 6-5 and looking for more wins -- maybe a lot more.

"I think at this point of the season, (our record) isn't that big of a shock," said sophomore attack Bella Wiechec, who leads the team with 20 goals and 7 assists. "Looking at our schedule, we knew we had games we could compete in."

The Huntley girls program started in 2014 with just 15 girls. This year, more than 70 tried out, according to coach Tony Nigro, who coached the JV team a year ago, and started both the boys and girls programs at the school.

Watching the team bloom into a competitive bunch has been fun for Nigro.

"I think it's mostly watching the girls buying into the program," he said. They want to do really good. It's, 'Coach, what can we do better, what should we look for?' They want to achieve wins, but how do we get better?"

The Raiders have plenty of young talent. Most of the attack is underclassmen, including Wiechec, who is in her second year of playing any lacrosse, and juniors Taylor Wentz and Olivia Wambacher. Wentz has 13 goals and 5 assists, and Wambacher has 7 goals and 5 assists.

But there is also veteran talent as well, and that starts with goalie Kaz Black, who has 133 saves and 1 shutout.

And there is plenty of help in the pipeline. Huntley's JV team is 4-1, with its only loss to a tough Barrington.

South Elgin stays hot: Another team that's enjoying a lot of success so far in 2019 is the South Elgin boys, who are one of a handful of area teams that are undefeated, at 9-0.

According to one of the team's captains, senior Patrick Noworol, there is one important reason for the Storm's resurgence after losing in a supersectional to Naperville North a year ago.

"Honestly, one of the major keys is our conditioning," Noworol said. "We're constantly running and being in motion. We push ourselves to the point of where we've never been as tired before, but in games, we're just pushing through."

South Elgin has scored a whopping 168 goals this season, for an average of 18.6 per game. That compares more than favorably to the 2.6 goals per game opponents are averaging.

South Elgin won the final Illinois High School Lacrosse Association championship, in 2017, so the Storm has already been to the top of the mountain, and the goal is to return there, under the IHSA format.

That will be a tough task, considering not only regional powers like Naperville North, Glenbard West, Lyons and St. Charles North, but also traditionally dominant Chicago north shore programs Loyola and New Trier.

But coach Dylan Butler, a 2012 Jacobs graduate, has his crew playing levelheaded and dependable, and that starts with the leadership of his senior captains -- Noworol, Cade Newton and Travis Tranchitella.

"They are different types of guys," Butler said. "Cade has been a player since he was a freshman, if we're down late, he puts the team on his back. Patrick has been on varsity since his sophomore year, he's the rah-rah leader, and Travis is one of the most dynamic lacrosse players I've ever seen."

A sport on the rise: If you want to gauge the growth of lacrosse in the Fox Valley area, look no further than the U46 Co-op girls team. It consists of players from four schools -- Bartlett, South Elgin, Streamwood and Elgin -- and 90 percent of the players never picked up a stick before the season.

At this point of the season, U46 is 1-5-1, playing a JV schedule. Of course, there have been high points, like defeating Geneva 7-6 in its very first game, and low points, including back-to-back-to-back games the week of April 15, all losses.

Nevertheless, the team is gelling, according to coach Natalie Homan.

"I could not have asked for a more diverse group of girls," Homan said. "I've got many freshmen and sophomores and only one senior this year. It's been mind-blowing. They go out for dinner with each other, they are in their group chat. It's been great."

Got an idea for a future notebook item? Tweet it out to @GreggVossPreps.

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Changing places

Starting catcher Romasanta takes the mound for South Elgin

By: Paul Johnson



Logan Romasanta, normally the starting catcher for South Elgin, pitches against West Aurora on Wednesday.

Pitching performances have been few and far between for South Elgin senior Logan Romasanta, who is team's starting catcher.

In Thursday's Upstate Eight Conference series finale at West Aurora, however, Romasanta took off the gear and took the ball.

Romasanta pitched a complete game in his second start of the season, helping South Elgin to a 4-2 win in the rubber game of the three-game series. The Upper Iowa commit allowed two runs, one earned, on four hits, with eight strikeouts and one walk.

"I wanted this spot," Romasanta said. "I'm just a hyped-up person, so I wanted to throw. I was just getting into my legs, staying consistent. That was the main thing I had to work on. Everything else was working."

Romasanta (2-0) was staked to a 4-0 lead going into the bottom of the fourth. Grant Baker had an RBI single in the second.

Small ball led to a three-run top of the fourth.

Despite not hitting the ball out of the infield, Griffen Allen, Austin Doty and Patrick Keaty collected RBIs for the Storm (14-3, 12-2).

The only earned run Romasanta allowed was Darin Hartkopp's homer in the bottom of the fourth. West Aurora (14-6-1, 10-4-1) added an unearned run in the seventh.

"He did a very nice job," South Elgin coach Jim Kating said. "We needed somebody to step up. He did so. He pitched well, and we needed that.

"That hard part is finding situations where I can throw him because he's valuable behind the plate too. If he can throw like that, we're going to be running him out there."

South Elgin and West Aurora tied for the UEC title last spring. The teams put together an entertaining three-game set this week in the battle for the conference title, with West taking the middle game Wednesday in eight innings.

"It's a measuring stick of where we're at, and they played really well," Kating said. "This is an atmosphere like playoff baseball, and we needed that right now."

West Aurora coach John Reeves took it as a measuring stick as well.

"The biggest thing is the growth from one portion of the season to another," Reeves said. "I would say we're progressing into a much better team than we were a couple weeks ago."

Two teams playing well made for solid baseball as April winds down.

"It was a good series," Reeves said. "There was a lot at stake in terms of who will be on top of the leader board. We obviously would have liked it the other way, but they have a very nice team. It was two good teams going at it."