

Press Clippings 1/28/2022

Elgin Courier-News

U-46 high school teachers, paraeducators to receive crisis intervention training --- 1/28/2022

By Mike Danahey

About 1,500 District U-46 high school teachers and paraeducators will take a 3.5-hour class Friday on dealing with student crisis situations related to the pandemic or other issues.

The training is being conducted by the Crisis Prevention Institute, which has a \$210,000 contract with the district that includes this week's program and a second to be presented before the end of the school year, according to Robin Barraza, the district's coordinator of culture and climate.

"The training will focus on recognizing the stages of conflict and crisis and how to verbally de-escalate such situations," she said.

Friday's training will not be done at school but online, Barraza said. The 2.5-hour session that will take place at a later date will be in person, she said.

Heidi Skinner, president of the Crisis Prevention Institute, said the company has 40 years' experience in providing de-escalation and behavior management training for educators. Its clients include about 500 school districts in Illinois, and they've help train about 17,000 certified instructors in 6,460 educational institutions, she said.

The U-46 sessions will cover how trauma can affect student behavior and potentially lead to a crisis situation, Barraza said. Trauma can be collective experience, such as the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, or something unique to one student, such as parents going through a divorce or food insecurity at home, she said.

"There are a lot of different reasons," she said.

Skinner agreed.

"Trauma is exactly what some students have faced coming from stress-filled home life where families have been forced to work and learn under the same roof," she said. "Some parents lost their jobs, kids have even watched as loved ones became ill and passed away.

"It hasn't been easy for anyone, let alone children. As a result, we added educator-specific content that provides a deeper understanding of trauma, including the causes and associated behaviors, as well as essential resources to be trauma-responsive," Skinner said.

Based on conversations Barraza has had with teachers, behaviors being exhibited by students now are different than what they were seeing two years ago, at the pandemic's outset, she said.

"Students are telling us they feel more stressed now," she said. "What we are seeing is more escalated behavior."

That can be things like yelling, verbal arguments or not wanting to comply when being told to do something, Barraza said.

"Many students will be just fine. That is certainly our hope," Skinner said. "However, making sure teachers are prepared in advance to handle potential adverse situations is crucial. We do expect more challenges coming out of the pandemic considering the trauma and anxiety it has caused."

The district's goal over the next three years is to have all staff trained to a certain level in verbal intervention and trauma awareness, Barraza said.

U-46 currently has six staffers who are crisis intervention trainers, and district's contract with the institute calls for 30 instructors to be trained on how to teach crisis skills to others, Barraza said. Those instructors will be deans and assistant principals, who will receive this training after the current school year ends, she said.

Daily Herald

Just poppin' in for a bit: Mama Lee's Gourmet Popcorn finds temporary home at Centre of Elgin --- 1/28/2022

By Rick West



The Elgin City Council approved a temporary lease at the Centre of Elgin for Mama Lee's Gourmet Popcorn, a popular downtown business that's relocating while its space inside the 40 DuPage Court building undergoes redevelopment. *Rick West | Staff Photographer*

The owner of Mama Lee's Gourmet Popcorn said he's looking forward to giving visitors to the Edward Schock Centre of Elgin a "poptastic" experience after receiving approval from the city council Wednesday to move there on a temporary basis.

Chris Sumner will move his popcorn retail store from 20 South Spring St. to the vacant cafe space at the Centre while the building his shop occupies is under construction. 40 DuPage Court is being redeveloped as The Courtyard at 40, a more than \$11 million project that will feature about 4,500 square feet of ground-floor commercial space, some of which will be occupied by Mama Lee's.

The four upper floors will be made up of a mix of 40 studio, one- and two-bedroom market-rate apartments.

Sumner, who plans to be open in the Centre by Valentine's Day, said he was having trouble finding a temporary spot downtown until he saw the space at the Centre.

"I was like, man, this is it, this is home," Sumner said. "This is popstastic."

The month-to-month lease comes with a \$400 monthly rent and can be terminated by the city or Mama Lee's with 30-day notice.

Sumner said he plans to expand his offerings beyond popcorn at the Centre to be more of a concession stand, while still giving people what he calls the "Mama Lee's experience." The popcorn will be cooked off-site.

Mama Lee's has been in business since 2015 and also operates a location in Spring Hill Mall in West Dundee.

Sumner is active in the Elgin community, visiting over 35 elementary schools in **School Districts U-46** and 300 to read with children before the pandemic. Mama Lee's was honored in 2019 by the city during Black History Month as one of Elgin's most successful black-owned businesses.

Sumner said he might also like to keep a presence at the Centre after he's able to reopen his original location if the city is interested.

"Ultimately, Mama Lee's is family oriented and heavily involved in the community," he said. "So the Centre is a cool place for us to be."