

# VILLA PARK REVIEW

NEWS AND VIEWS OF OUR TOWN

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CHRIS FOX PHOTO Villa Park Review

## Villa Park Junior Women's Club presents scholarships

The Villa Park Junior Women's Club (VPJWC) sponsors annual scholarships to benefit two female high school seniors who are residents of Villa Park. The club recently presented this year's scholarships to two members of Willowbrook High School's Class of 2016—~~Martina Martens and Alexa Henderson~~. The club presented the scholarships to ~~Martens and Henderson~~ during last month's senior recognition ceremony at Willowbrook. ~~Martens~~ received a \$1,500 scholarship, while ~~Henderson~~ received a \$500 scholarship. The two recipients and club representatives were recognized during the Villa Park Village Board meeting on June 13.

Pictured left to right after the recognition at Village Hall are: club members Kara Highfill, Jenny McQuillan and Amy Jenkins, VPJWC Vice President Jen Krichbaum, Martens, Henderson, VPJWC President Gina Knudtson and club treasurer Kris MacLeod. ~~Martens~~ will attend Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa, where she plans to study secondary education. ~~Henderson~~ will attend Aurora University, where she intends to study special education. The VPJWC, which was founded in 2005, awards its scholarships based on applicants' grade-point averages and records of community service.

## Village board OKs agreement with developer for Garden Station

By Chris Fox  
Lombardian-Villa Park Review  
STAFF REPORTER

The Villa Park Village Board voted during its June 13 meeting to approve a redevelopment agreement between the village and the developer of the Garden Station project.

The project, which will reportedly cost at least \$46 million, calls for the construction of a six-story complex of about 230 residential units just north of the Villa Park Metra Station. The development will be located east of Ardmore Avenue, south of Vermont Street, west of Beverly Avenue and north of Terrace Street.

The village board approved the redevelopment agreement between the village and Golden Spike Development of Chicago. Rick Goldman, a co-founder and managing partner with the company, gave a brief presentation during the meeting.

Villa Park Village Manager Rich Keehner also delivered a presentation at the meeting. Keehner stated that Golden Spike had requested financial assistance from the village due to the extraordinary costs associated with the development. Those costs include demolition of existing structures in the area, as well as reconstructing utility systems.

"It's a large development with a lot of moving parts," said Keehner, who added that construction of the project is scheduled to begin on or before June 1, 2017. The target for completion and occupancy is the end of 2018.

Keehner noted that the village created a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district in the area including the Garden Station site in 2014. That TIF district also includes Jefferson Pool. TIF status reportedly allows municipalities to utilize future property tax

revenues to fund improvements in an underdeveloped area. Keehner said that some of the property tax revenue generated by the Garden Station development could be used to maintain the pool.

The Garden Station complex's residential units will include studio, one-bedroom and two-bedroom apartments, as well as two-bedroom townhomes. The development will include an indoor heated garage, a clubhouse, a fitness center and an outdoor pool, as well as commercial real estate space.

Providing some information about the agreement between the village and Golden Spike, Keehner said Golden Spike is obligated to provide proof of financing sufficient to construct the project. Golden Spike is working with PNC Bank, which will provide funding. Additionally, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) will reportedly guarantee the funding for 40 years.

If financing for the project is not approved by March 31, 2017, the agreement can be terminated, and all obligations of the village will be canceled. The deadline may be extended, but in no event will the extension be granted beyond Dec. 31, 2017.

### TERMS OF AGREEMENT

Terms of the agreement require Golden Spike to provide the village with its records related to construction, maintenance and repairs at the site. Golden Spike will also be required to give the village copies of real estate tax bills for the project site.

Keehner explained that it is the intention of the village and Golden Spike that a portion of the project may be financed through the issu-

ance of bonds by the village, as long as the developer is not in default. The bonds will be supported solely from 75 percent of incremental real estate taxes produced by the project.

The village manager added that the incremental real estate taxes produced by Garden Station will be placed into a subaccount. The village will use funds from the subaccount to pay the principal and interest on the bonds, and to reimburse the developer. Keehner said 25 percent of the incremental property taxes generated by the Garden Station project will come to the village and be utilized for improvements in the area.

"Staff fully supports the development," said Keehner of Garden Station and the agreement with Golden Spike. "We think this would definitely be an asset."

Golden Spike's proposal to build on the parcel of land just north of the Villa Park Metra Station dates back several years. The company initially proposed building condominiums on the site, but in 2012, Golden Spike asked the village board to allow the development to be built as an apartment complex.

A real estate agent who sells property in Villa Park spoke at the June 13 meeting and asked about the prices of the residential units, which will range from 600 to 1,400 square feet. A representative from Golden Spike stated that the target rates stood at \$1,300 per month for a studio apartment, \$1,600 per month for a one-bedroom apartment, \$2,200 per month for a two-bedroom apartment at \$2,800 per month for a town-home unit.

The real estate agent stated that Villa Park real-estate values on the north side of the village, where the development will be located, are

significantly lower than those on the south side of the village. She asked the developers if they felt comfortable they could attract people to pay those rental prices. She also asked the developers if they had a backup plan and wondered how many units they could afford to have vacant before they had a problem.

Goldman responded that Golden Spike would not have invested in the project without feeling comfortable in attracting renters. He added that four independent market studies showed there would be interest in the units.

"We have more supporting evidence, not just a feeling or a hunch, than we have probably ever had for a project," said Goldman in referring to the Garden Station development. "Clearly there is a market in Villa Park. It's already been established. It's underserved. That's the problem. What we see is there's too much demand and not nearly enough supply."

### AMENITIES AT GARDEN STATION

Goldman outlined some of the amenities of the Garden Station units, including stainless steel appliances and custom flooring.

"This is truly luxury that really does not exist in this marketplace right now, and by marketplace I will say eastern DuPage County," said Goldman.

A resident from the 400 block of North Yale Avenue asked who would clean up the dirt and mud that will be generated by construction of the project. The resident also mentioned that numerous trucks that pass through the area during construction will produce noise and potentially cause damage to roads.

Trustee Nick Cuzzone said that

one of the major concerns of the project was related to the involvement of HUD in the development.

"When people hear HUD housing, the first thing they think of is Section 8," said Cuzzone, in referring to subsidized housing for low-income residents. Cuzzone asked Goldman to confirm that the HUD financing guarantee will not allow subsidized housing. Goldman responded that PNC Bank is the lender for the project, while HUD will provide secondary insurance for the loan. Goldman stated that the Garden Station development cannot provide subsidized housing.

"It would destroy the project; it would never get approved," Goldman said.

Villa Park Village President Deborah Bullwinkel stated the Garden Station project has been discussed since 2007. Bullwinkel, who joined the village board as a trustee in 2009 (she was elected village president in 2013) said she has watched the project grow and go dormant over the last several years. She also complimented the current members of the village board for the time and energy they've given to studying the project and the village's agreement with Golden Spike.

"This is for our entire town; this isn't a north-side versus south-side thing," said Bullwinkel before the board voted 6-1 during the committee-of-the-whole segment to approve the village's agreement with Golden Spike. Several minutes later, the board approved a first and final reading of the agreement during the formal segment of the meeting.

Villa Park Trustee Chris Aiello cast the lone vote against the ordi-



### Seven straight victories

Patrick Niyork of Villa Park approaches the finish line during his first-place performance at Saturday's Lauren M. Kiefer 5K Family Run/Walk. Niyork completed the 5-kilometer race in a winning time of 16 minutes, 27.6 seconds. Niyork, who graduated from Willowbrook in 2012, has won the race every year since 2010. Niyork, who was a standout cross country and track athlete at Willowbrook, received a Lauren M. Kiefer scholarship in 2012. He is now a member of the track and cross country teams at the University of Wisconsin-Parkside.



### Runner-up finisher

Isaac Trostle of Villa Park completes the Lauren M. Kiefer 5K Family Run/Walk on Saturday. The race began near Ardmore and Riordon roads, just east of Willowbrook High School. The finish line was located on Highridge Road, just north of the school. Trostle, who graduated from Willowbrook in 2010, finished the race in a second-place time of 16 minutes, 54.2 seconds. Trostle ran on the school's track and cross country teams.



CHRIS FOX PHOTOS Villa Park R

## Hundreds take part in Kiefer run

More than 200 people participated in the 10th annual Lauren Kiefer 5K Family Run/Walk, which took place Saturday morning. The 5-kilometer (about 3.1-mile) run/walk began and ended outside Willowbrook High School. The photo shows some of the participants running eastbound on Riordon Road during the opening sector of the race. The event is named after 2000 Willowbrook graduate Lauren Kiefer. All proceeds from the race benefit the Lauren Kiefer Memorial Foundation, which supports numerous charity causes and awards annual scholarships to Willowbrook seniors. The foundation has awarded about \$75,000 to students from the school since 2007.



## Lauren Kiefer Day

Villa Park Village President Deborah Bullwinkel reads the village proclamation designating Saturday, June 18, as Lauren Kiefer Day in the village. Bullwinkel read the proclamation moments before the start of Saturday's Lauren M. Kiefer 5K Family Run/Walk outside of Willowbrook High School. Jan Kiefer, Lauren's mother and the athletic secretary at the school, is pictured in the background, over Bullwinkel's right shoulder.

## Park Art Center welcomes guest speakers on June 29

The nonprofit Park Art Center, located at 9 E. Park Blvd., Villa Park, invites the public to attend an educational program conducted by two guest speakers. The program will begin at 7 p.m. on Wednesday, June 29.

Frank Jackowiak, a College of DuPage photography program specialist, will discuss how he developed over 200 rolls of Vivian Maier film that were decades old. Sandy Steinbrecher, a professional photographer who prepared Vivian Maier silver gelatin prints, will talk about

the intricacies of that process. A panel discussion with the audience will follow.

The Park Art Center's "Vivian Maier Uncrated" exhibit runs through July 30. It features a collection of 35 prints and a limited edition Vivian Maier photography book featuring 300 prints of her works. Admission to the exhibit is free. Donations will be accepted. The Park Art Center is open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Friday, and from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday.

## Kiwanis Club's series of four summer concerts begins July

The Kiwanis Club of Villa Park will present its annual summer concert series next month. This year's concert series features four Wednesday-night performances in July.

Each concert will begin at 6:30 p.m. near the Rugaard Gazebo, located west of Ardmore Avenue and just south of the Illinois Prairie Path. Residents are invited to bring their blankets, lawn chairs and appetites to the four concerts. The concession stand, which will offer hamburgers, hot dogs, brats, soda and more, will open at 6 p.m. on the night of each concert.

The Willowbrook High School Band and vocal impressionist John Truncali will perform during the July 6 concert. The StingRays, whose repertoire includes rock and roll from the 1950s, 60s and 70s, will headline the July 13 concert. The July 20 con-

cert will feature the contemporary Christian music of the St. Joe Praise Team from Lombard's John's Lutheran Church and Sch Generation, a rock group from Bletts, will provide entertainment at the final concert of the series on July 27.

**If you go...**  
**WHAT:** Summer Concert Series  
**WHERE:** Near the Rugaard Gazebo, located west of Ardmore Avenue and just south of the Illinois Prairie Path  
**WHEN:** Wednesdays in July, beginning with July 6 - 6:30 p.m.



SUBMITTED PHOTO Villa Park Review

## Three generations of Villa Park baseball

Friends and longtime Villa Park residents Al Stasch and Rik Mallin (back row, left to right) represent two families with longtime ties to Villa Park Youth Baseball (VPYB). Stasch and Mallin are pictured with their sons and grandsons. Pictured left to right (front row) are Ed Stasch with his son Ethan, along with Skylar Mallin and his father Patrick. Al Stasch was a coach, commissioner and umpire director for VPYB. Ed Stasch is a former VPYB player and a current coach of Ethan, who plays for the Athletics in the Minor Division. Rik Mallin is a longtime VPYB coach. Patrick is a former VPYB player who's now coaching Skylar on the Minor Division's Red Sox team. Ethan and Skylar are both eight years old.

## Board (Continued from front page)

during the committee-of-the-whole segment of the meeting. Shortly before the vote, Aiello said he would have preferred to vote for the project as a condominium development rather than an apartment complex. Aiello then proposed to amend the agreement by calling for Golden Spike to construct the façade of complex entirely from brick and stone.

Goldman responded that his company spent more than three years developing the façade for the complex. He said the proposed building does include some brick.

"To assume that at this point in the process with all that's gone into it and the level of complexity, that a building material, one building material makes the difference between a success or a failure I think is not fully respecting how complicated this process is and what we put into it," said Goldman, who said the Garden Station project will introduce some new building materials.

Trustee Albert Bulthuis said the village would receive all of the property tax revenue related to the project after about 17 years of paying off redevelopment costs. Village attorney Kathleen Field Orr said the life of the TIF status of the area will be 20 years. She also said the agreement states the maximum

amount the developer will receive from the village is 25 percent of total costs. Golden Spike must prove to the village it is spend at least \$46 million on the project.

Goldman said that when the status of the area ends, the village will receive 100 percent of property tax revenues generated by the Garden Station. He cited a provision stating that the revenues would be about \$1.3 million a year when the TIF designation expires.

"The economic benefit to the village is tremendous in terms of the project," said Goldman.

Orr added that the redevelopment agreement protected the village cause there was no obligation to village or its citizens if the Garden Station development did not generate what Golden Spike projected. Goldman said the risk goes to bondholders, not the village.

"Why do we bother fixing up part of town?" stated Trustee Robert Taglia in expressing his support of the redevelopment agreement. "People call it the bad part of town. If we don't do anything to fix it and develop it, it will always stay that way. Once this development goes on, your property values are going to go up. The EAV [equalized assessed value] of the village is going to go up."

# Sports

LOMBARDIAN  
VILLA PARK REVIEW

## Lombard's Zito prepares to compete in Olympic swimming trials

By Chris Fox  
LOMBARDIAN-VILLA PARK REVIEW  
STAFF REPORTER

Lombard resident Nick Zito will swim at the upcoming U.S. Olympic Team Trials in Omaha, Neb.

Zito, 21, earned berths to the trials earlier this year in two events—the 100- and 200-meter breaststroke. The trials, which take place June 26–July 3, will determine the United States swimmers who will compete at the 2016 Olympics in Brazil. The swimming competition at the Olympics will begin on Aug. 6.

Zito punched his ticket to the USA Olympic Trials in Omaha when he swam under the qualifying times in both breaststroke events at the Arena Pro Swim Series event held March 3-5 in Orlando, Fla. He completed the 100-meter breaststroke final in a 13th-place time of 1 minute, 32.8 seconds—meeting the USA Olympic Trials standard of 1:03.69. Zito finished the 200-meter breaststroke final in a 10th-place time of 2:16.13, which met the qualifying standard time to reach the trials—2:18.39.

The top two finishers in each breaststroke event at the trials in Omaha will qualify for the U.S. Olympic Team.

"I kind of knew that I could go those times," said Zito. "I'm very happy that I actually did them. I was just really excited to be able to go that fast."

Zito set personal-best times in each of the breaststroke events at the competition in Orlando. He dropped about 1.5 seconds off his best time in the 100-meter race and shaved a little more than two seconds off his best time in the 200-meter contest.

Zito joined the Lombard Waves park district swim team when he was 5 years old. He spent his final season with the Waves in 2013, the same year he graduated from Willowbrook High School. During his senior season as a member of the Addison Trail/Willowbrook boys swimming team, Zito earned two top-five finishes at the 2013 IHSA



CHRIS FOX PHOTO Lombardian/Villa Park Review

Lombard resident Nick Zito will swim at the upcoming U.S. Olympic Team Trials, which begin June 26 in Omaha. Zito, who graduated from Willowbrook High School in 2013, will compete in the 100- and 200-meter breaststroke events at the trials. The top two finishers in the finals of each breaststroke event in Omaha will qualify to represent the U.S. at the Olympics in Brazil. Zito is pictured in his final meet as a member of the Lombard Waves in the summer of 2013. Zito joined the Waves when he was five years old.

state meet. He placed second in the 200-yard individual medley and claimed a fourth-place finish in the 100-yard breaststroke.

After graduating from Willowbrook, Zito went to the University of Iowa, where he was a member of the Hawkeyes' men's swimming team. The rigorous academic and athletic schedule took a toll on Zito, who contracted mononucleosis during his freshman year and lost a significant amount of weight from his already tall and lean frame. The 6-foot, 9-inch Zito did not compete in any swim meets during his soph-

omore season. He returned home after his sophomore year at Iowa and decided to take a break from school and swimming.

"I wanted to get away from swimming for a while," said Zito, who began swimming in competitive club meets when he was about 8 years old. "Most of my time for the past 12 years has been going to swim and work out. There were probably only two weeks per year that I wasn't swimming. It's been non-stop."

Zito took a seven-month break from swimming in 2015, staying out of the water from February to Sep-

tember. Jeannine Zito said her son wasn't sure if he wanted to swim anymore. He eventually decided to return to swimming and began training with West Superior Training, formerly known as Westmont Swim Club.

He soon began a whirlwind schedule of competing in Arena Pro Swim Series events around the country—Minnesota in November, Texas in January and the Florida competition in March, followed by events in Arizona in April, North Carolina in May and one in Indiana earlier this month.

"The break helped a lot," said Zito. "It pretty much made me mentally and physically able to go back in and work toward the trials."

"Everybody's afraid to take time off," said Jeannine Zito in referring to the grueling training schedules of elite swimmers. "Kids think they can't have success if they take some time off. But Nick wasn't training hard in 2015 until September. Sometimes the body and mind need a break. It's OK to take a break and reset your goals."

Swimmers often "taper" for a major event by easing up on their training schedules in the preceding days and weeks to build up strength for an important race. Nick did not taper his races in Orlando.

"He had energy," said Jeannine, who added that her son also benefited from traveling to the meet with Hinsdale Central student Franco Reyes, a friend and fellow elite swimmer. "That was a distraction, which helps. When he's relaxed, he swims faster."

Reyes, who also swims for West Swim Club, has represented Panama in international events. He may swim for Panama at the Olympics in Brazil.

Zito's chances of qualifying for the Olympics may be slim, but he does have a chance, and unlikely stories have played out before at the qualifying trials. There is an elite national meet in Minnesota shortly after the trials. Zito may or may not attend that competition.

"Sometimes you've got to have your own downtime, and focus on something else," Jeannine said.

Zito has fond memories of his several seasons as a member of the Lombard Waves park district team.

"It was a whole different experience from the club atmosphere," he said of his summer seasons with the Waves. "It was much more fun and relaxed. It wasn't all business all the time. You could go hang out with your friends and get away from all the competition. I really enjoyed it."



### Firebirds win division title

The Firebirds Soccer Club's U-12 Black boys team won first-place honors in its division during the spring season. The Firebirds posted a perfect 8-0 record to win the title in the Northern Illinois Soccer League (NISL) Gold Division—Northwest level. They scored a total of 38 goals during the season while allowing 11 goals. Members of the team (pictured left to right) are: (front row) Ryan F., Colin M., Guy D., Billy A., Owen W. and Peter V.; (middle row) Brennan Z., Adrian G., Riley J., Brendan Y., Danny K. and Jasper C.; (back row) coaches Ben May, Mike Williams and Mike DeFeo.

SUBMITTED PHOTO Lombardian/Villa Park Review

• **Board**

(Continued from front page)

**Can market support luxury rentals?**

The project, with 230 luxury dwelling units, underground resident parking, and retail space on the ground floor is adjacent to the Metra Station on Ardmore Ave. The building will take up nearly the entire block from the train tracks to Vermont St.

"This is really a luxury Class A, incredibly energy-efficient building," Goldman said. "This is truly luxury that does not exist in this market currently, I would say eastern DuPage County."

Projected rents are \$1,300 per month for a studio apartment, \$1,600 for a one bedroom, \$2,200 for a two bedroom up to \$2,800 for a town home unit.

A real estate professional addressed the Village Board, questioning if those rents could be supported in Villa Park. According to Goldman, four separate market analyses were commissioned, including an independent study commissioned by the Village. All reports indicated that the level of rent sustainable was at or above what the project is seeking.

"This isn't just a feeling or a hunch," Goldman said. "Clearly there is a market in Villa Park, it is underserved."

**Project will have no subsidized housing**

"One of the big concerns that we on the Board have seen, when people hear of HUD housing, they think of Section 8, low income housing," said Trustee Nick Cuzzone. "It is my understanding that the HUD financing you are getting will not allow subsidized housing. This is strictly high-end housing."

"The program we are in, PNC is the lender and HUD provides a secondary insurance for the loan," said Goldman. "The largest risk is the interest rate. They could jump dramatically or stay where they are, which is what we believe. We cannot provide subsidized housing. It would destroy the project, it would never get approved. There is no model that would make that feasible in any scenario."

Trustee Chris Aiello proposed that the project use brick and stone for the entire facade, as that is what is being used on similar successful projects in the area.

"I would have preferred to vote for this as a condo development," Aiello said. "Not going to happen. Financing doesn't exist. Gotta be an apartment building. If we gotta go that way, let's at least get something built in town that will look like what we want our town to look like. In order to generate that kind of sense of elegance, then you have to do brick and stone, like it is everywhere else."

Such a change would, however, require new architectural drawings and introduce a further delay in the project.

"I don't think we want to do anything to slow down this agreement right now. We're looking at a 90- or 120-day (wait) before we get approval from HUD," said Trustee Al Bultuis. "If we're shooting for construction to begin in June of next year, we don't have the kind of time to wait and redo this."

The Board voted 6-1 to move the Committee of the Whole agenda item to a first and final vote later that evening. Aiello was the sole no vote.

During the Formal Agenda portion of Monday's meeting, the project was approved with a 6-0 vote. Aiello was not in attendance for the final vote.

"Thanks to the Village and to the residents for hanging in there with us, this is a big deal," said Village President Bullwinkel after the vote. "We want to make you proud."



PAUL DELGUIDICE PHOTO Villa Park Independent

**Fast company**

Villa Park's own "Wild Bill" Reeves greets Marina Anderson in front of the Anderson Family Dragster on Friday, June 17 at the Summerfest Date Night/Car Show. Marina is the driver and she is from Villa Park. More photos elsewhere in this issue.

**Elmhurst woman wins Kiefer 5K**

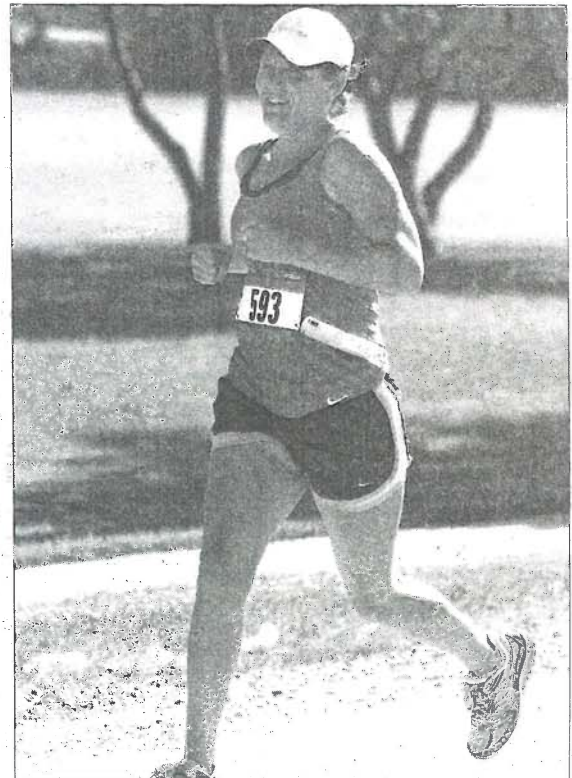
*Race honors Christmas Day murder victim*

On Saturday, June 18, the Remembering Lauren Kiefer 5K Family Run/Walk was held in Villa Park and the winner was Maria Cicero Lindberg of Elmhurst. The race is named in honor of Kiefer, a graduate of Willowbrook and an employee of Fitz's Pub in Elmhurst, who

was murdered in her home on Christmas Day, 2006.

Maria Cicero graduated from York in 2001. Last Saturday, she was the female champion of the 5-kilometer race, which she finished in 19 minutes, 43.4 seconds (6th place overall—five men finished before her).

During her senior year at York, she won the IHSA Class AA girls cross country individual state title, and led York's girls team to the team title. She went on to run track and cross country at Boston College.



CHRIS FOX PHOTO Villa Park Independent

Maria Cicero Lindberg won the Remembering Lauren Kiefer 5K held on Saturday, June 18 in Villa Park.

**College news**

The following Villa Park residents recently graduated from Elmhurst College:

- Maureen A. Barry, BM
- Beverly Bartos, BS
- Sabrina Chaudhry \*\*\*, BS
- Justin M. Copeland, BA
- Michelle K. Curio, BS
- Javier A. Gallegos\*, BS
- Edgar W. Garner Jr. \*\*\*, BS
- Francis K. Gentile, MBA
- Riley E. Hazen \*, BA
- Salma Iftikhar, BS
- Gloria Kari \*\*\*, BA
- Janice Lara \*, BS
- Melanie J. McGinnis \*\*\*, BS

- Nicole Barbara McIntyre, BS
  - Lawrence G. Van Meter, BS
  - Michael D. Napientek \*\*, BM
  - Sean N. Padilla, EDU
  - Kara N. Peterson, MS
  - Maryam Rehman \*\*, BA
  - Cassandra E. Schumacher, BS
  - Richard A. Spataro \*, BS
  - Stephanie Lauren Trapani \*\*\*, BA
  - Rachael L. Vaughan \*\*, BA
  - Elizabeth A. Yap, NME
  - Sydney B. Zeig, BA
- KEY: \* - cum laude, \*\* magna cum laude, \*\*\* summa cum laude

# SPORTS

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## Willowbrook's Betts earns outstanding male athlete honor

*High-honor roll student headed to St. Olaf's to study pre-med*

By Mike Miazga  
CORRESPONDENT

Recent Willowbrook graduate Lucas Betts hopes his time at the school as a student-athlete made a lasting impression.

Betts recently was named the Willowbrook Athletic Booster Club's outstanding male athlete for the 2015-2016 school year. But that award has much deeper meaning to Betts.

"It means a lot to me because I get a chance to be a good example to other up-and-coming students about what it really means to be a student-athlete, play multiple sports and excel academically in the classroom," he said.

Betts played boys' soccer and volleyball at Willowbrook. He was a three-year varsity performer on the soccer team and played two years of varsity volleyball. As a senior, he was a captain on both teams.

Betts earned all-West Suburban Conference Gold Division honors as a senior in soccer (he played center midfielder) and in volleyball (outside hitter). He also was named to the Chicago Fire all-state academic team as a senior.

"I like both sports equally," he said. "I couldn't pick between them, which is why I had to do both of them all four years."

Betts started playing soccer at the age of five at the park-district level and then moved up to the club level. He still plays for the Lombard Typhoons club team.

"With soccer I really enjoyed the bond I had with my teammates," he said. "I grew up with my fellow Typhoons players and some of them went on to play at Willowbrook. Our bond and chemistry was strong when we played, which is why we had a good winning season our senior year."

Betts picked up volleyball in seventh grade at Jackson Middle School. "I liked how I really improved in volleyball because I didn't play at the club level," he said. "I liked improving with my teammates and helping them improve by working hard in practice. We had some success because we put our strength together and improved as a team and improved our chemistry as a team."

Betts was equally up to the task in the classroom at Willowbrook where he sported a 4.6 cumulative grade-point average and ranked sixth in the school's senior class of 483 students.

"Studies always have been a great priority for me," he said. "I wanted to learn as much as possible with the advanced-placement classes so I could get a head start in college. I know there still is a lot of work ahead for me."

Betts is headed to St. Olaf in Minnesota to study and play club volleyball there.

"I am primarily focused on studying pre-med," he said. "I'm looking at emergency medicine or radiology. I still have a lot of time to decide. I have a lot of family in medicine, a lot of nurses with my aunts and uncles and I have a cousin who is a doctor. I love the aspect of helping people in their greatest time of need."

Looking back, Betts said his greatest sadness in leaving Willowbrook is remembering the athletic competitions he played in.

"I will miss the game nights," he said. "I'll miss the late nights with the soccer team under the lights on the field or being in the main gym for volleyball with a big crowd and playing as a team and working our hardest to get a win."

Next week: A profile on Willowbrook outstanding female athlete Samantha Wozniak.

## Addison Trail baseball team seeing positives during summer season

*Coach Kennedy focuses on development*

By Mike Miazga  
CORRESPONDENT

Forget the Addison Trail summer baseball team's 0-5 record out of the gates.

Coach Mike Kennedy is looking at the bigger picture.

"We're 0-5 right now but we are playing very competitive ball," he said. "The summertime is for development. Some of our regular pitchers are pitching on their summer travel teams so that's given other guys the opportunity to showcase their abilities. I'm very pleasantly surprised with how some of our younger guys are competing right now. Our last three games we've been losing by one or two runs. Different guys are getting work. It's all a growth process and I'm happy with how we are playing so far."

Kennedy also likes the competitive nature of his pitching staff. "We have guys pitching who aren't in our top end of the rotation and could end up playing key roles as relief pitchers or spot starters," he said. "They

are going in there and throwing the ball well and effectively. And hopefully that pushes guys and they are looking over their shoulder and thinking, 'I better be good or someone is going to take my spot.' Guys know they are competing for a spot in the rotation or a spot on the staff. They are taking the ball and throwing it with authority. It's been fun to watch them."

Kennedy also is seeing his Blazers' squad make strides at the plate. "Our hitting is starting to come around as well," he said.

In particular, Kennedy has seen good progress from the likes of Ricky Perez and Simon Marinelli. "Ricky is off to a good start this summer," said Kennedy. "He's our returning center fielder and our No. 3 hitter. Ricky is as solid as they come. Simon is behind the plate and leading off for us. He's been on a tear and continues to get better."

Trevor Fulmer also has been a key offensive contributor. "Trevor has been swinging a good bat for us," said Kennedy. "He pitches for his summer team as well. He's at the top end of the rotation and swings the bat effectively."

Senior-to-be Mitch Gomez has provided an additional spark. "Mitch

has been a pleasant surprise," said Kennedy. "He's a utility guy for us. Last week he had games like 3-for-3, 3-for-4 and 2-for-3. He's driving the ball, dropping a bunt down and did this playing third, short and second for us. With versatility like that going into his senior year, he's going to be very enjoyable to watch grow into that role."

Kennedy noted both Fulmer and standout pitcher Nick Villasenor recently played in the Chicagoland Showcase event representing the West Suburban Conference at Triton College. Fulmer played first base and Villasenor was on the pitching staff.

"Hopefully they will be back throwing for us this week," said Kennedy late last week.

Addison Trail was scheduled to play Streamwood, Elgin Larkin and Geneva earlier this week.

"We aren't putting the wins up yet like we would like, but it's all about development right now," said Kennedy. "Those juniors-to-be are getting accustomed to the speed of the varsity game. And our juniors last year are getting to take the reins as seniors. They have an opportunity to shine and they are taking the opportunity to do just that."

## Timothy Christian boys basketball team finishes strong at Braidwood

*Trojans win final three games of shootout*

By Mike Miazga  
CORRESPONDENT

Things didn't start out the greatest for the Timothy Christian boys basketball team at the recent Braidwood shootout at Reed-Custer High School.

The Trojans lost their first two games, but came back on the final day to win all three of their games and leave the event with positives to ponder.

"We lost the second game by two points and I don't know if we should have lost that one," said Timothy Christian coach Jack LeGrand. "But the guys came back and won the last three games."

Timothy also has been playing in leagues at Riverside-Brookfield and Westmont. "It's been a summer that has been packed full," said LeGrand.

"Between camps and playing games, we're going Tuesday through Saturday and we're playing some good competition. At R-B, we've had a good summer so far."

And LeGrand is seeing his team take steps forward. "The guys are showing flashes and playing very good basketball," he said. "We have good chemistry and the kids share the ball well. The problem is trying to get consistency the entire game."

LeGrand said one big boost has been the sophomore class that will be juniors this fall. "The juniors who were sophomores had a lot of success at the lower level," he said. "It's been fun watching them get acclimated to the bigger-school pace of varsity basketball. In our first game you saw that 'eyes in headlights' look, but that's long gone now. They are getting better every day."

Timothy has been led this summer by senior captain Joey Davidson. "Joey is our leader and captain and is having a great summer so far," said LeGrand. "He was a good leader for us last year."

The Trojans also have been bolstered by the play of Jonny Strube and Trayvon Williams. "Both of them have played very well," said LeGrand, who also lauded the contributions of returning seniors Nick Tameling and Jon Hoekstra.

Juniors-to-be Brandon Orange and Ty Merrick have come out strong this summer. "Brandon is 6-5 and has a real nice touch around the basket," said LeGrand. "Ty also has been playing very good basketball. He has a nice feel for the game. He sees the floor very well and does a lot of intangible things."

Other contributors this summer include Michael Thomas, Michael Martens, Nick Huisman and Jimmy Allen. "Michael Thomas is playing good basketball," said LeGrand. "Michael Martens was on the state soccer team and is a good guard for us who has played good minutes. The interesting thing is we have some height. Brandon is 6-5, Nick Huisman is 6-4/6-5 and Nick Tamel-

See BASKETBALL Page 17

# Willowbrook baseball team turning the corner

*Espinoza belts home run against Glenbard East; Ruchala pitching well*

By Mike Miazga  
CORRESPONDENT

The Willowbrook summer baseball team has picked things up in recent days.

The Warriors, who play two squads during summer doubleheaders, were 8-4 through their first 12 games after starting 4-3.

"We are playing good baseball right now," said Willowbrook coach Vic Wisner. "Our first group hasn't lost yet. Having the two groups helps build camaraderie and team chemistry. Everyone is getting to know each other."

Wisner said keys during the summer have been no different than other years—being aggressive at the plate and turning in strong pitching performances.

"We are doing the little things like moving guys along and we are throwing the ball well," he said. "We are getting guys on and moving them over. We're seeing guys get more confident and getting better and better."

Alec Michaelson and Will Hines have been pitching well for the Warriors, while junior-to-be Vince Ruchala was off to a 2-0 start through late last week. Sophomore-to-be Jack Nilles also has been a factor on the mound.

## •Basketball (Continued from page 16)

ing is 6-3 and is a strong kid. These kids have big bodies and are able to do some things for us and help us on the glass."

Allen is a three-sport athlete for the Trojans. "Jimmy is very athletic and plays the three sports, so he's only been with us a couple days," said LeGrand. "He's a piece to the puzzle for us as well."

"As always, we are throwing the ball well," said Wisner.

In a recent doubleheader against Glenbard East, Wisner noted Ruchala took a 2-1 lead into the seventh inning, but found himself in a second-and-third jam with no outs.

"Vince got ahead in the count to the next batter and got the strikeout," he said. "We intentionally walked the next guy (to load the bases) and Vince had a great changeup and he got a guy to beat the ball into the ground and we turned two and won the game. It was nicely done and cool to see."

Wisner also cited recent strong play from Jack Hines (Will's brother), Jon Kelso (center field), Kyle Ferguson (second baseman, three-year varsity player) and Ben Espinoza.

"We have good talent at the underclass levels and we have good senior leaders," said Wisner. "We lost some awesome kids that went out as seniors this spring. They taught these new seniors how to be leaders and how to run a team."

Wisner has been especially impressed with Espinoza's development. "Ben hit a huge homer for us against Glenbard East," he said. "He's hitting about .600 for us and has two homers from the leadoff position. He has a .700 on-base percentage. He's putting up crazy numbers. He's always one of the hardest-working guys. It's awesome to see a kid like that get rewarded."

Wisner again lauded the work of his assistant coaches. "My coaches at the lower levels do a great job of getting guys ready to the point when they come up and expect to win," he said.

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