

# THE INDEPENDENT

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On Thursday, Dec. 10, Montini junior Reeghan Boyer and senior Nick Fisch help load up food to be delivered to a local food pantry. It was all part of Montini Catholic's "Season of Giving."

## 'Season for Giving' thrives at Montini Catholic

### Students collect food, toys despite COVID-19 challenges

Montini Catholic is currently in the midst of its Christmas season of giving. Although this year the season looks a little different than before, due to COVID-19 regulations forcing sports and other activities to be put on the shelf until further notice. Still, the spirit of giving at the Lasalian college preparatory high school is alive and thriving.

Students wrapped up their annual Golden Gobbler Thanksgiving Food Drive benefiting local food pantries in late November and immediately after, quickly stepped right back into high gear, collecting money and toys for their Adopt-a-Family and Toy Drive programs in December.

Montini Catholic's traditional 'Catholic Charities Adopt a Family' service program enables students to donate toys and gifts to families facing hardship during the holiday season or throughout the year. This year, seven families were 'adopted' by the school community.

Homerooms are traditionally busy shopping, donating, sorting and wrapping loads of Christmas gifts for area families during this time of year, but COVID-19 restrictions led Montini's Campus Ministry leaders to opt for gift cards for the families, instead, just in time for them to do their own Christmas shopping prior to the big day.

During the beginning of December, students and families were invited to donate money towards the purchase of the gift cards.

"We immediately exceeded our goal amount," said Kelly David, co-assistant Campus Minister and Theology teacher. "We were so grateful that our students and families responded so quickly. The families we adopted this season will benefit greatly!"

Montini's Peer Ministry group added to the contributions by selling Candy Grams.

"We also decided to sponsor a week-long toy drive this year," said co-assistant Campus Minister and

Theology teacher Katie Miller. "The toys donated through this will be sent to the children at the Clearbrook and Eisenhower Co-Op agencies in Crestwood, serving families of children with disabilities. Montini alum Katie Laurinaitis '04 is a teacher at Eisenhower."

"Our students really make a difference by lifting the spirits of families in need at the holiday time," said Campus Minister Michael Blanchette. "Each year Golden Gobbler and Adopt-a-Family remind us of what is important in life and there's no better time than the holidays to reflect on and share our many blessings."

## Addison Trail recognizes December graduates

On Dec. 10, Addison Trail recognized 36 students as December graduates for the 2020-21 school year.

Those students have met the requirements to earn a high school diploma and worked hard to complete those requisite items early. They have demonstrated the skills and knowledge necessary to pursue a successful future and to be college and career ready.

The 2020-21 Addison Trail December graduates include: Emma Bastian, Briseida Carbajal, Noel Celis, Jennifer Cortez, Carter Cunz,

Jocelyn Delgado, Sariah Fox, Giselle Gamino, Eric Garcia, Jacob Hagopian, Victoria Kolek, Jessica Krause, Amie Lear, Yubitza Lopez Rodriguez, Ezekiel Lopez, Ruby Macias, Terrell Magbett Jr., Sylwia Malecki, Gabriela Manjarrez, Daniel Medina, Victoria Medina, Leslie Nava, Jasmin Nervis, Evelyn Nino-Ocampo, Ashanty Olea, Marina Pereida, Edy Perez Garcia, Angel Ramirez, Mictzi Salgado, Fatima Sanchez, Natalya Trejo Huerigo, Viktorija Tvaskunaite, Sulmi Mari-sol Velasquez.

## Park District hosts 'Letters to Santa' program

### Still time to write Kris Kringle

The Addison Park District is advising boys and girls that Santa has left two very special Red Mailboxes -- one at the Community Center and another at the Centennial Rec Center -- where kids are invited to drop their letters to Santa.

The mailboxes are available now through Friday, Dec. 18, so get busy writing! Santa Claus will respond to letters by Christmas Day, Dec. 25.

The Community Center is open Monday-Friday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. The Centennial Center is open Monday-Friday from 5 a.m. to 10 p.m. as well as Saturday 6 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday 7 a.m. to 5 p.m.

# District 88 mourns Superintendent Dr. Scott Helton

*COVID-19 cause of death for former Addison Trail principal; had suffered stroke in October*

Comments have been pouring into the offices of District 88 Schools from people shocked and saddened by the passing of Superintendent Dr. Scott Helton, who had contracted COVID-19 and about two weeks later suffered a stroke, according to school authorities.



**Dr. Scott Helton**  
Superintendent,  
School Board  
District 88

Helton passed away on Thursday, Dec. 10 in a rehabilitation facility, where he was being treated. Unfortunately, obituary and service information was not available at press time.

"It is with great sadness I share the news that District 88 Superintendent Dr. Scott Helton has passed away," said District 88 School Board president Donna Craft Cain. "Scott had more than 33 years of experience in education and served in a variety of capacities, including as Principal of Addison Trail for 11 years and as Superintendent of District 88 since 2012. He was incredibly engrained in the District 88 community and helped build positive futures for countless students through his contributions to public education and coaching

football, wrestling and track."

After that, Cain made a plea to keep the family in thoughts and prayers but to respect their privacy as well, especially for Helton's three sons, Scott Jr., Joe and Tommy.

"The family members are incredibly grateful for everyone's kind words and support, and although they appreciate the thought of phone communication, attempts to visit and flower deliveries, this time is very overwhelming," Cain said. "Those who would like to send the family messages of sympathy and condolences are invited to do so at [dupage88.net/MessagesforHelton](http://dupage88.net/MessagesforHelton).

"Scott had a personal connection with many of our students, staff and community members, and this loss is extremely difficult."

Cain said support services were being offered at both Willowbrook and Addison Trail high schools.

"I've personally known Scott since I joined the District 88 Board of Education in 2004, and his passion and dedication were second to none," Cain continued.



**Donna Craft Cain**  
District 88  
School Board  
president

"He was a tremendous leader, who always put the needs of students first. He was laser focused on making sure we connected with and cared for each and every pupil, and he was relentless in his pursuit of accomplishing our mission to work for the continuous improvement of student achievement. Scott will be greatly missed, and his impact on our schools and community and the legacy he has left behind will last for years to come."

Helton died Thursday night, leaving the district of more than 3,900 students without its top administrator. He had suffered a stroke in late October, two weeks after contracting COVID-19, Cain said.

Helton spent his education career in District 88 as principal of Addison Trail for 11 years before attaining the position of superintendent.

He made a point to expand dual-credit classes to provide AT students with an easy pathway to a college degree. While still in high school.

Helton also extended more opportunities to those who may have been overlooked previously for the college-level Advanced Placement courses.

"One of the goals was to make sure every student was graduating with college credit or some vocational training," Cain said. "He was passionate about keeping the career and technical classes going as well as our arts and our music."

Helton kept equity issues at the forefront since students from low-income families take up nearly 54% of the student body at Addison Trail and 36.5% at Willowbrook High School in Villa Park.

Before the pandemic forced a switch to remote learning, the district had already obtained a grant from Sprint to ensure students had internet connections.

"He was very much about making sure that everybody had what they needed," Cain said.

Helton strove to support school systems that feed into District 88, with the mutual goal of providing a seamless transition from middle to high school.

Addison Elementary District

**“ He was laser focused on making sure we connected with and cared for each and every pupil, and he was relentless in his pursuit of accomplishing our mission to work for the continuous improvement of student achievement.”**

**— Donna Craft Cain,**  
District 88  
School Board president

4 Superintendent John Langton called Helton a "visionary" adept at bringing people together and forging relationships.

"He was a cheerleader for the entire community," Langton said. Helton held a wide range of positions -- science teacher, dean of students, assistant principal and associate principal -- in different schools before coming to Addison Trail.

Outside the district, he coached youth sports and served as the president of the Rotary Club in Villa Park and Lombard, setting in motion a plan to honor a fellow club member and veteran.

The man had never received his high school diploma, having gone to fight in the Korean War. He would have graduated from York High School in Elmhurst. Helton took it upon himself to reach out to the current York principal about getting the man his long-awaited diploma, Cain said.

"That's the type of thing that he would do," she said.

Cain said she's not concerned about a leadership void in the district because of the culture Helton instilled. He was a collaborative, "tremendously supportive" educator who was open to new ideas and suggestions, she said.

"He's going to live on within the district."

"What a loss," Dr. David

Larson, Superintendent of Schools, Glenbard Township High School, District 87 posted on Twitter: "A strong educator, a champion for equity and a great friend. Makes me sad."

Downers Grove North Wrestling posted that Helton was "a great friend to Illinois wrestling."

"An amazing man," said Lori ED. Bein, Ed.D., Superintendent, Arlington Heights District 25.

"I am deeply saddened by the loss of my friend Scott Helton," said Terry Clarke of Elmhurst, who knew Helton as a coach for the Elmhurst Eagles. "He changed so many lives with his coaching, leadership, and kindness. He coached my son Anthony with the Elmhurst Eagles. I had the privilege to coach his sons, Scott, Joe, and Tommy at York. God bless."

Although services were not announced at press time, they will be on the Addison Independent web site as soon as information is available.

The Independent can be found at [theindependentnewspapers.com](http://theindependentnewspapers.com).

## Fenton swim team begins virtual season

*Focus on nutrition, mechanics*

The Fenton Boys Swim and Dive Team is meeting for a 'Remote' winter season this year. The team sessions are from 4:00 to 4:50 p.m. on all days Fenton school is in session.

While you may not consider yourself a swimmer, and you are wondering what to do each day after school for 50 minutes, you might enjoy coming out for the team, via Google Meet. In fact, your family might like that you have decided to become a remote swimmer after school. Our goals this season are to get stronger, get more athletic, learn about nutrition, mechanics of swimming, and grow one's ability to compete effectively.

If you want to take the chance of being on the Swim and Dive Team without being in the pool please contact Coach Dan Hennebry ([henebry@fenton100.org](mailto:henebry@fenton100.org)). Let him know that you will give it a try, if even for a few days -- remote Swim Team is the ultimate in 'no out sport'. That said, you will learn a routine for training that can be used in most any sport with transferable skills to use for a long time to come, and you might have fun.



ARCHIVE PHOTO Rock Valley Publishing

## Always part of the bigger community

Always a supporter of the community at-large, pictured is District 88 Superintendent Dr. Scott Helton with Director of Community Relations Dan Brink at a Villa Park Chamber of Commerce event in 2013. Helton passed away on Thursday, Dec. 10, after a COVID-19 diagnosis and after suffering a stroke.

## Addison Trail students invited to audition for Virtual Variety Show

Attention, Addison Trail students! There's still time to try out for the Theatre Department's Virtual Variety Show.

The deadline to submit auditions has been extended to Jan. 8, 2021. Talent of all types is wanted -- dancers, musicians, actors, comedians, martial artists, magicians, ventriloquists, etc. All interested participants can upload their talent via the web site.

The Variety Show will be streamed online, free to viewers, and the date has been postponed to Jan. 15, 2021. The event will begin at 7 p.m., and information to access the performance will be posted at [dupage88.net/ATVarietyShow2020](http://dupage88.net/ATVarietyShow2020).

For questions or more information, contact Addison Trail Theatre Director Anna McSweeney at [amcsweeney@dupage88.net](mailto:amcsweeney@dupage88.net) or 630-628-3365.



SUBMITTED PHOTOS Rock Valley Publishing

## G.M. Smith & Son Realtors hold annual food drive

G.M. Smith & Son Realtors of Villa Park held its annual holiday food drive, with Saturday being delivery day. Two work vans and four pickup trucks filled with over 130 boxes of food and personal products were delivered to two local food pantries: Disciples Food Pantry in Villa Park, and St. Vincent de Paul Food Pantry at St. Plus in Lombard. Additionally, G.M. Smith & Son Realtors was able to give the pantries approximately \$3,000 in donated checks and gift cards. G.M. Smith & Son Realtors has held the annual food drive since 2008, with the exception of one year that it held a coat drive for homeless veterans. The Villa Park Police Benevolent Association began holding its day-long food drive next to the Villa Park Jewel last year and held it again Dec. 18. The association was able to collect enormous donations both years. What it collected is added to what G.M. Smith & Son Realtors collected, and it's all delivered together. From left to right: officer Kordell Kitching, detective Anthony Blake, officer Bart Banaszewski, officer Eric Haimann and detective D.J. Giammarino.



## Local entertainer participating in fundraiser

**BTB Foundation raising money to help families fighting cancer**

By Jane Charmelo  
VILLA PARK REVIEW STAFF REPORTER  
While there is nothing funny about cancer, Lombard's native son and Villa Park resident—comedian and actor Matt Kissane—is offering his own brand of humor to help one non-profit organization raise money to help families facing hardship due to cancer and related illnesses.

The BTB (Beat Tom and Bill) Foundation is now in its 19<sup>th</sup> year of fundraising after first organizing a charity golf outing, dinner and auction to help a friend whose wife was undergoing treatment for cancer.

That first outing raised \$3,000 with 30 attendees, according to Tom Latourette. Since then, the all-volunteer organization he and his brother, Bill Latourette founded has raised over \$1.3 million to benefit 102 families, including 16 this year (12 families and four scholarships).

In 2019 alone, there were some 300 golfers and over 500 dinner guests, he added, along with 100 volunteers.

Latourette explained that the idea behind the fundraiser is to compete with him and Bill at golf.

"My brother and I golf ahead of time," he described, and the other golfers try to beat their score, but with a twist.

The golfers are "harangued" or challenged, whether it be by a polka band, having to tee off in clown shoes, or having to golf one hole sitting on a strategically placed toilet!

The idea is, "They get distracted," Latourette explained, adding, "Every hole has got stupid stuff like that!"

Instead of a golf outing this year, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020 fundraiser has gone virtual. Kissane related, noting that he participated in previous BTB Foundation golf outings, and, "They have local entertainers like myself come out."

Kissane said he is volunteering his comedic services, such as impersonations of Donald Trump and Chris Farley's "Matt Foley," and has participated on the golf course for several years: In 2017, as Chris Farley, "We went out there [on the golf course] and messed with the golfers!"

In 2018 he portrayed Donald Trump and in 2019, he was Robin to WGN personality Mike Toomey's Batman. The entertainers try to rattle the golfers to put the "fun" in fundraising, Kissane described.

Kissane, a Montini Catholic High School graduate, is not only a comedian whose specialty is impersonating Matt Foley, Farley's motivational speaker character who "lives in a van down by the river."

He has appeared on WGN-TV, was

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## Jean Barbanente named District 88's interim superintendent

Board makes appointment following the death of Scott Helton; Barbanente has been with the district since 1995

### STAFF REPORT

The District 88 Board of Education recently named assistant superintendent Jean Barbanente as the district's interim superintendent through June 30, 2021. The board announced the appointment at its Dec. 14 meeting.



Jean Barbanente

Scott Helton, the district's superintendent since 2012, died on Dec. 10.

Helton suffered a stroke in late October and was being treated at a rehabilitation facility.

Barbanente has been with Dis-

trict 88 for 25 years. She's been an assistant superintendent for 14 years. The district's two schools—Willowbrook High School and Addison Trail High School—serve a total of about 3,900 students.

"I have every confidence Jean will continue the tradition of excellence that has been established here at District 88," said board president Donna Craft Cain. "Scott was a tremendous leader, human being and advocate for students, and he can never be replaced. But I know Jean will continue his legacy, and her extensive background, knowledge, skills and passion will help lead our district through this challenging time."

Barbanente joined the district in 1995 as a member of the World

Language Department at Addison Trail, where she taught Italian and Spanish. In 2002, Barbanente became the Guidance Department Chair at Addison Trail. She was named an assistant superintendent in 2006. According to the district, Barbanente has provided leadership in the areas of teaching, learning, human resources, compliance, equity and Pupil Personnel Services (PPS) during her time as an assistant superintendent.

Barbanente received her doctorate in educational leadership from Aurora University in 2019. She earned her doctorate after successfully defending her dissertation, titled "Leadership in Difficult Times: Deep Equity, Race and the Journey Toward Equity Literacy."



SUBMITTED PHOTO Rock Valley Publishing

### Willowbrook 'Warrior Project' adopts 10 families from York Township for Christmas

Willowbrook High School leaders and staff recently hand-delivered loads of Christmas presents and gift cards to York Township Hall as part of its Student Council's "Warrior Project." This year the project adopted 10 families with a total of 27 children through York Township in Lombard. Every holiday season, York Township brings together families through its "Adopt a Family for Christmas" gift program with

the help of local individuals, companies and organizations, such as Willowbrook's annual "Warrior Project." From left to right: Willowbrook High School Principal Dan Krause, Assistant Principal Jamie Gourley, Student Council Sponsor Malcom Ross, Food Pantry Director Angela Tanner, helper Caroline Clendenin, Student Council Sponsor Ashley Anderson and York Township Supervisor John W. Valle.

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