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THURSDAY, SEPT. 2, 2021

Frerichs family: Bring Mark home

Lombard native has been held hostage in Afghanistan since January, 2020

By Mike Sandrolini
FOR THE INDEPENDENT

By the end of last week, the United States had evacuated more than 5,000 Americans from Afghanistan since Aug. 14, according to U.S. officials.

However, one U.S. citizen, Lombard native Mark Frerichs, was not among them as the deadline set by President Joe Biden for American troops to withdraw from Afghanistan (Tuesday, Aug. 31) has now passed. A U.S. Navy veteran, Frerichs had been living and working in Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan, for 10 years as a civil engineer until he was kidnapped by a group closely aligned with the Taliban in January, 2020. The Taliban captured Kabul in mid-August and has now taken over the country.

Art Frerichs, Mark's father, and his family have been trying to secure Mark's release ever since his abduction.

'I feel very helpless'

"I feel very helpless with the way things are going with the government and the way the administration has handled the main evacuation," said Art in an interview with the *Independent*. "It's getting really bad for any type of negotiation, that's for sure. I want my son back and I can realize, though, that there's so many other people over there now in the same mode (trying to get out of Afghanistan)."

Further complicating the situation in Afghanistan were suicide bombing attacks outside Kabul's airport Aug. 26 that left 13 U.S. service members killed and 18 injured, along with

over 160 Afghans dead.

"It's definitely going to complicate things more," said Art, who owns Art's Master Mechanics Auto in Lombard. "It's a terrible mess. It also shows us that the Taliban is not to be trusted. We (the U.S.) should be taking control instead of taking orders from them."

On Aug. 16, Art's daughter, Charlene Cakora, and her husband met in Washington D.C. with officials from the FBI, the State Department, the Department of Justice and the National Security Council, hoping to secure Mark's release. In a recent interview with BBC News, Charlene made a direct plea to President Biden:

"Please treat my brother like he was your son and act to bring him home quickly," she said.

The BBC story noted that when U.S. officials have pressed for Frerichs' return, the Taliban mentioned releasing Bashir Noorzai, a drug lord affiliated with the Taliban who has been serving a life sentence for smuggling heroin worth around \$50 million into the U.S. Noorzai has been in prison in the U.S. for 16 years.

According to a *Wall Street Journal* story published Aug. 27, Charlene has urged the U.S. to consider exchanging Noorzai for her brother.

In a White House press briefing Aug. 26, Press Secretary Jen Psaki was asked by a reporter if the Biden administration has been in negotiations to release Mark as part of prior negotiations with the Taliban.

"We've certainly raised his case at every opportunity," Psaki said. "And it certainly has been raised, but

I don't have an update on that case."

No communication with Mark

Art said neither he nor his family has had any communication with Mark all this time.

"I kind of feel a little deserted by the government really, because that's why you have a government is to protect you and keep its citizens safe," he said. "The FBI has been working on it (trying to secure Mark's release) for quite a while and they do what they've been doing, but it's been frustrating that they haven't even been able to locate him. They (the Taliban) keep moving him around over there. It seems like anytime you work with the government, it takes a long time to get anything

done."

Art and his family—specifically his daughter—have been in contact with Illinois Senators Tammy Duckworth and Dick Durbin, both of whom have been advocating for Mark's safe return. Art also mentioned someone from U.S. Rep. Sean Casten's office contacted him last week.

"She seems to be very diligent in trying to push it through (to get Mark home) and make everybody aware of it," Art said of Duckworth, an Iraq War veteran who lost both of her legs when a helicopter which she piloted was hit by a rocket-propelled grenade fired by Iraqi insurgents. "I think the biggest thing is having everybody aware of what's going on (with Mark). There hasn't been that

much publicity on it or anything in the (news)paper (about Mark) for a while. Some people I talk to, especially in the news media, assume that this was all taken care of."

Art said he wonders how his son is being treated by his captors.

"I'm not familiar at all with the living conditions over there or anything else," he said. "I do know that the Taliban and those people can be pretty brutal."

He said his faith in God has helped him cope with Mark being detained these past 19 months.

"I believe there's a God and I believe He's doing what needs to be done (with regard to his son)," he said. "You just have to go with faith."

See FRERICHS, Page 4



SUBMITTED PHOTO Addison Independent

D88 cafeteria staff now safety-certified

Pictured are members of the District 88 cafeteria staff proudly showing the certificates they received after participating in FARECheck, an enhanced training and review program in food handling and safety practices to help keep food-allergic individuals safe. Cafeteria workers took a class and a test to obtain this certification. District 88 is one of only two school districts in northern Illinois to have gone through this training and certification program.

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Addison Trail alumnus awarded Critical Language Scholarship

Addison Trail alumnus Edgar Palomino (class of 2013) was recently awarded a U.S. Department of State Critical Language Scholarship (CLS).

The CLS program is part of a U.S. government effort to expand the number of Americans studying and mastering critical foreign languages.

Alumna named as Digital Federal Credit Union 2021 scholarship recipient

Addison Trail alumna Huda Siddiqui (class of 2021) recently received a scholarship from the Digital Federal Credit Union's (DCU) charitable foundation, DCU for Kids.



Huda Siddiqui

The scholarship program is designed to assist students in the pursuit of a higher education. This year, the foundation distributed 120 scholarships totaling \$190,000 to graduating high school seniors. Siddiqui received a \$1,500 scholarship to attend Yale University.

While at Addison Trail, Siddiqui was named as an AP Scholar with Distinction and a Leadership Enterprise for a Diverse America (LEDA) Scholar. She also was part of the school's Youth Equity Stewardship (YES!) series, a program focused on preparing students to recognize and learn from the diversity around them and helped implement an Islamic Awareness Week to recognize the Muslim culture. Siddiqui participated in the Muslim Student Association, Key Club, National Honor Society, Student Council, UNICEF, Science Club, Psychology Club, Blazer Ambassadors and the girls track, tennis and badminton teams. Siddiqui's passion for mental health, particularly in the Muslim community, led her to create "Grateful Guidance," a project dedicated to providing more resources and empowering students to improve their mental health.

CLS scholars gain critical language and cultural skills that enable them to contribute to U.S. economic competitiveness and national security. Palomino is one of nearly 700 competitively selected American students at U.S. colleges and universities who received a CLS award in 2021. Through that program, Palomino studied Chinese this past summer.

Palomino graduated from University of Pennsylvania in 2017, where he studied political science and international relations. He plans to earn his master's degree in international affairs and policy analysis in May 2022 from American University in Washington, D.C. Palomino also served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in the Republic of Moldova and is aiming to become an American diplomat.



SUBMITTED PHOTO Rock Valley Publishing

Edgar Palomino



SUBMITTED PHOTO Rock Valley Publishing

It's a Blazer Bash

On Aug. 5, Addison Trail hosted a Blazer Bash to welcome members of the class of 2024 and the class of 2025. About 100 students attended, and participants enjoyed food, music, Blazer wear (spirit wear) and more. They also had an opportunity to get to know the building and their classmates through a fun scavenger hunt and heard a motivational message to begin the 2021-22 school year.

Nine AT alumni named as COD Scholars Award recipients

College of DuPage recently announced its incoming students who have been named as Scholars Award recipients for fall 2021, and nine Addison Trail alumni from the class of 2021 were recognized as honorees.

There are three categories of awards: Presidential, Board of Trustees and Deans. Recipients include:

- Addison Trail Presidential Scholars: Zain Ahmed, Charles Bekielewski, Tiffany Cuevas, Hamza Kittaneh, Sameer Majeed, Nancy Obrzut and Syed Quadri
- Addison Trail Trustee Scholars: Natalya Trejo and Konrad Nowak.

•Frerichs

(Continued from front page)
Mark the magician

Art said the photo of Mark posing with Afghan boys that accompanies this story brings back memories of his son performing as a magician while he was growing up in Lombard.

He said Mark, a Glenbard East graduate, used to perform magic shows at various events, such as Cub Scout and Boy Scout meetings, before going into the Navy. Art added that Mark learned some of the tricks he used in his show from Marshall Brodien, a professional magician who regularly appeared on WGN-TV's Bozo Circus.

"He likes kids and I'm sure he probably entertained those (Afghan) kids over there with card games and different magic shows," Art said. "That's probably why he has those kids around him (in the photo)."



SUBMITTED PHOTO Rock Valley Publishing

Mark Frerichs of Lombard, shown here with a group of Afghan boys, was kidnapped in Kabul in January 2020. The Taliban took over Afghanistan last month.

Tickets now on sale for 4th annual 'Addison Uncorked'

Craft beer and wine tasting set for Sept. 14 at Historical Museum

On Tuesday, Sept. 14 from 6 to 9 p.m., enjoy a festive evening under the stars at Addison Uncorked on the grounds of the Addison Historical Museum at 135 W. Army Trail Road. Tickets are \$20 in advance or \$25 at the door.

The fourth annual craft beer and wine tasting fundraiser will feature wine and craft beer from sponsors August Hill Winery, Church Street Brewing Company and Famous Beverages. Mario's Deli will be sharing favorites from their menu. Out in the garden courtyard, classical guitarist Hector Fernandez will serenade guests under the stars as they sip, nibble, and mingle. Everyone is encouraged to tour the Addison History Museum buildings and view the exhibits while wearing a required face mask.

This event will benefit four of the

Village of Addison's non-profit organizations – the Addison Center for the Arts, the Addison Historical Society, the Addison Women's Club, and the Addison Knights of Columbus. Purchase discounted tickets in advance at the Addison Historical Museum in person during museum hours or by calling 630-628-1433.

Representatives of the Addison Women's Club will be selling advance tickets at Rock 'N Wheels the first week of Sept. If you aren't ready to commit, tickets will be available for \$25 at the door on Sept. 14.

All guests must be 21 years of age or older. In the event of rain, Addison Uncorked will move to the Addison Village Hall rounda.

For tickets and more information, contact Julie Mars, Addison Center for the Arts, at julie@addisoncenterforthearts.org.



ARCHIVE PHOTO Rock Valley Publishing
Pictured here is the crowd who attended the last Addison Uncorked event, but in 2019, not in 2021 because like most events last year, it had to be cancelled due to COVID-19. This year, the plans are to be on schedule for Tuesday, Sept. 14 on the grounds of the Addison Historical Museum. For tickets information, call 630-628-1433 or send an email to julie@addisoncenterforthearts.org.

Local Addison author recognized by STBF

Illinois librarians find what traditional publishers miss

Addison resident Dennis Avelar, a talented yet not well-known writer, just moved closer to well-earned recognition and fame, and Illinois readers have just been introduced to his three great new novels. And it's because of the growing partnership between writers and librarians.

Avelar, a patron of the Addison Public Library, has been named semi-finalist in the eighth annual Soon to Be Famous Illinois Author Project Indie Book Competition (STBF) for his book, *El Quetzal Azul* – *El Mundo Desde El Cielo*.

Why is this book different from most other books on library shelves? It did not come out of a major publishing house, nor has it been featured (yet) in publishing journals, but because it was entered in the STBF contest, it was read and evaluated by multiple volunteer Illinois librarian judges, trusted professionals who know what appeals to their reader patrons.

For a variety of reasons, thousands of high-quality books fly under the radar of the major publishing houses each year. Eight years ago, a group of Illinois librarians took up the challenge to find these hidden gems and demonstrate the power of libraries to create "buzz" around them—to make their authors famous—and the Soon to Be Famous Illinois Author Project was born. Previous STBF winners have enjoyed higher book sales, increased visibility on library platforms, and at least one publishing contract. This year we expanded the contest to include a category for Spanish language works. We're thrilled to announce Mr. Avelar's novel as one of the inaugural group of semi-finalists.

This outstanding work, along with six other Spanish language novels, five works of English young adult fiction, and eleven English adult fiction books were chosen as semi-finalists in this year's competition. Winners in each category will receive a cash prize, opportunities to promote their books at libraries and author fairs throughout Illinois, and the chance to compete with winners from other state competitions to be named Indie Author of the Year. They may also choose to have their book made available on online library platforms with the opportunity of earning royalties based on the number of times it is downloaded.

The judges are now back at work re-reading and further examining the semi-finalist novels and will narrow the field to three finalists next month, and after one more round of judging the winner will be announced in October.

For more information on the Soon to Be Famous Illinois Author Project and its competitions, please visit soontobefamous.info.

'Show Your Card and Save' initiative for library-card holders

Discounts and deals available at participating businesses

AdvancedTech has formed a partnership with the Addison Public Library along with 10 other local businesses for a special initiative called "Show Your Card and Save," taking place now through Thursday, Sept. 30.

Anyone with an Addison Public Library card can show their card at any of our participating businesses to receive a special deal. The partnership is part of the library's Library Card Sign-Up Month campaign. This year, the theme is "Stack Up Savings with Your Library Card," and as such, working with Addison local businesses to offer savings to our cardholders was a natural fit.

Participating businesses include Shoeless Joe's Ale House & Grill, Flavor Frenzy, Aurelio's Pi Muggs n Manor, Rosati's Pi Nardi's Pizza, the Addison 1 District, AdvancedTech Cell Phone Repair, Symbol Training Institute, The Learning Experience and Spired Windows, Ltd.

For more information on the campaign, visit addisonlibrary.org/offerings.

Little Blazer preschool registration open

Registration for Addison Trail's 2021-22 Little Blazer Preschool is now open.

The preschool class is taught by Addison Trail students in the Preschool I, Preschool II and Preschool Internship courses. Participants experience lessons in math, science, art, music, language arts and large/small muscle development.

Preschool takes place from 8:20 to 10 a.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

- The fall session will run from October to December (eight weeks).
- The spring session will run from March to May (eight weeks).

It will be held at Addison Trail, 213 N. Lombard Road in Addison (in the Early Childhood classroom) and is open to children ages 3 to 5 years. Fee: \$100 per child. To enroll, contact Lija Marzec at 630-458-4213 or lmazrec@dupage88.net.

Addison Trail class reunions announced

Attention, Addison Trail alumni – it's time to celebrate!

The following reunions are being planned, and members of these classes are invited to join the fun, reconnect with peers and show their Blazer Pride. Be sure to go dupage88.net/site/page/451 for all the event details.

- Class of 1970 ("50-year" reunion): Friday and Saturday, Sept. 17 and 18
- Class of 1971 (50-year reunion): Friday through Sunday, Sept. 17-19
- Class of 1981 (40-year reunion): Friday and Saturday, Oct. 8 and 9

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