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Addison INDEPENDENT

VOL. 23 • No. 20 WWW.ADDISONINDEPENDENTNEWS.COM THURSDAY, MAY 7, 2026

District 88's Barbanente named Superintendent of Distinction

Dr. Jean Barbanente, superintendent of DuPage High School District 88, has been named the 2026 Superintendent of Distinction by her peers in the DuPage Region of the Illinois Association of School Administrators.

Barbanente was honored at an awards luncheon on April 23 in Springfield, where 21 regional Superintendents of Distinction were recognized. Dr. Steven Isoye, chair of the Illinois State Board of Education, served as the featured speaker.

"I am extremely honored to have received this recognition from my colleagues in DuPage," said Barbanente, who has been an educator for 31 years and superintendent of District 88 for five years. "It has been a blessing to serve the students, staff, and families of District 88, and I look forward to continuing our work to open doors and remove barriers for students to achieve their dreams."

Those nominating Barbanente noted a number of successes during her tenure including:



Dr. Jean Barbanente

- Implemented a comprehensive curriculum including 30 AP courses, 50 dual credit/college credit courses and 18 industry-credentialed career pathways with work-based learning opportunities, with students earning over 5,600 college credits and over 1,700 career industry credentials in one year.
- Implemented inclusive and culturally responsive practices across the district with a strong emphasis on biliteracy.
- Led District 88 to receive the DuPage County Prevention Leadership Team Community Changemaker Award for leadership in providing mental health and social-emotional supports.
- Served as a leader at the county and state level through roles on the DuPage County IASA Executive Board, School Association for Special Education in DuPage County Board

President, Illinois Advisory Council for Bilingual Education, and founded the Illinois Consortium on English Learner Program Effectiveness with over 110 member districts.

"Exceptional leadership creates opportunities for students and strengthens communities," said IASA Executive Director Dr. Brent Clark. "At District 88, Dr. Barbanente's forward-thinking approach and dedication have transformed the district in meaningful and measurable ways."

The 12th annual luncheon was sponsored by Stifel, the country's leading underwriter of K-12 school bonds.

"The superintendents honored today exemplify the depth of leadership and personal commitment that exceptional superintendents bring to their districts to serve students and staff to be the best they can be," said Anne Noble, managing director of Stifel. "Stifel's longtime commitment to IASA culminates in honoring these amazing superintendents and thanking them for all they do for the students of Illinois."

Students volunteer at St. James Farm



On April 18, members of the Addison Trail Muslim Student Association worked with the school's Key Club and Student Council to volunteer at St. James Farm through the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County. The students, along with counselor and adviser Shane Cole, helped eradicate garlic mustard, a highly invasive biennial herb. Participants learned how garlic mustard came to the forest and the history of St. James Farm (which can be viewed at www.dupageforest.org/places-to-go/centers/st-james-farm). (Submitted photo)

Students participate in Art Exhibition



On April 19, five Addison Trail students participated in the Illinois High School Art Exhibition in Chicago. The event featured awards, college scholarships and a live art throwdown. Students also were able to meet with college representatives and show their portfolios. This event is hosted by Art ConnectED and brings together top student artists from more than 100 Illinois high schools to celebrate the power of art in their lives. Shown here: Senior Janet Simental was awarded first place in the painting and art throwdown competition. (Submitted photo)



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Bensenville hosts annual Earth Day cleanup

The Village of Bensenville celebrated Earth Day with its annual community cleanup event on Wednesday, April 22, at Redmond Park, where approximately 75 volunteers came together to help beautify the park and surrounding area.

Participants of all ages spent the afternoon collecting litter, improving green spaces, and demonstrating their shared commitment to environmental stewardship and community pride.

The annual event continues to bring residents, local organizations, and village leaders together in support of a cleaner, healthier Bensenville.

Village President Frank DeSimone thanked volunteers for their time and dedication.

“Earth Day is an opportunity to come together and make a positive impact right here in our own community,” said DeSimone. “We are grateful to every volunteer who gave their time to help care for Redmond Park and keep Bensenville looking its best. Their efforts reflect the pride and spirit that make our village such a special place.”

The village also encourages residents, neighborhood groups, businesses, schools, and community organizations to help keep Bensenville clean

throughout the year by organizing their own neighborhood or property cleanups. Every effort, large or small, helps make a difference and strengthens community pride.

The village extends its appreciation to all volunteers and community partners who helped make the event a success, with special thanks to the Garden Club of Bensenville and the North DuPage Special Education Cooperative’s Transition Learning Center for their continued support and participation. For more information about future community events, visit bensenville.gov.

Celebrate mom at White Pines with free golf

White Pines Golf Club makes it easy to treat mom to an unforgettable experience this Mother’s Day. Females of all ages can golf free of charge all day Sunday, May 10, at White Pines, 500 W. Jefferson in Bensenville.

White Pines PGA General Manager Andrew Godfrey said, “The Mother’s Day golf special is a great tradition celebrating moms and growing the game of golf among women and families in our community.”

Reservations for golf can be made in advance at WhitePinesGolf.com/teetimes, with tee times available throughout the day.

Please note that there is a limit of 18 holes per reservation.

The White Pines Golf Club’s two 18-hole championship courses, situated on more than 260 acres, has been a favorite among Chicago area golfers since 1928. The public course is owned and operated by the Bensenville Park District and is an excellent choice for players of all skill levels.

Whether it’s an evening at the lighted driving range, a casual round with mom or an outing or special event, White Pines Golf Club offers the perfect setting to get “away from it all.” Patrons are invited to stick around after the round and enjoy cocktails and a meal with mom at 37 Bar & Grill. The menu includes starters, salads, sandwiches, craft beer, wine, specialty cocktails and new flatbread pizzas.

Visit WhitePinesGolf.com for more information.

Women’s Club enjoys flower arrangement program



The Women’s Club of Addison recently enjoyed a flower arranging program on April 9 led by Katherine Regan, owner of Gatherings by Kate, who demonstrated and shared tips on creating a centerpiece for any occasion. Members then were able to unleash their creativity by putting together their own arrangement. For info on how to join, email womensclubofaddison@gmail.com (Submitted photo)

Piece together the fun at Puzzles in Full Bloom competition

Puzzle lovers and friendly competitors alike are invited to put their skills to the test at the Puzzles in Full Bloom competition, a lively, team-based challenge that promises fast-paced fun and a race to the finish.

Teams of three to four participants will go head-to-head to complete a 500-piece puzzle as quickly as possible, with prizes awaiting the top finishers.

The event takes place from 7 to 9 p.m. Friday, May 15, in the Oak Room at Deer Grove Leisure Center, 1000 W. Wood St., and is open to all ages. The entry fee is \$45 per team.

“Puzzles in Full Bloom is a great way to challenge your mind while having fun with friends or family,” said Recreation Supervisor Breana Forester. “It’s exciting, a little competitive and a perfect opportunity to work together and think creatively in a relaxed, social setting.”

Whether participants are seasoned puzzlers or just looking for a unique night out, the event offers a welcoming atmosphere filled with teamwork, laughter and a bit of brain-teasing excitement.

Teams can register in person at the Deer Grove Leisure Center or by calling 630-766-7015.

Addison Trail News

AT hosting student Spring Art Show

Now through May 9, the artistic talents of Addison Trail students will be on display during the school’s annual Spring Art Show.

The exhibition is being hosted in the Addison Center for the Arts (ACA), which is located inside the school at 213 N. Lombard Road in Addison. The show will consist of pieces that feature a variety of mediums such as painting, drawing, sculpture, ceramics, cartooning, photography and design.

Registration open for athletic camps

From May to August, Addison Trail will host a variety of athletic summer camps. Registration is open, and details are listed below.

Registration and payment:

- For a list of available camps, as well as other important forms and details, go to <https://schools.snap.app/aths/resources>. The information is available in English and in Spanish.

- Online registration and payment can be completed at <https://dupage88.revtrak.net/aths-menu/rw-aths-athletics>.

- The registration form and payment also can be dropped off at door 1 (the main entrance) at Addison Trail. Checks and cash are accepted.

- Registration and payment also can be mailed to the following address. (Don’t mail cash): *Addison Trail High School; Attention: Mrs. Cosio—Summer Camps; 213 N. Lombard Road; Addison, IL 60101*

For questions or more information, call the Addison Trail Athletic Department at 630-458-4391.

AT hosts Math Team send-off celebration

On April 17, Addison Trail hosted a state send-off celebration for members of the school’s Math Team, who competed in the Illinois Council of Teachers of Mathematics (ICTM) State Math Contest. That event took place on April 18 at Illinois State University. Those students are:

- Algebra Team: Freshmen Purav Patel and JD Rohlfling
- FS 2-Person Team: Freshman JD Rohlfling and sophomore Andrew Roycewicz
- Geometry: Sophomore Aishah Chaudhry
- Pre-Calculus: Senior Emily Moy

- JS 8-Person Team: Senior Emily Moy, junior Gabriel Kular, junior Jesus Lopez, junior Francesca Rohlfling, senior Jordan Ciezobka Jr., senior Krish Patel, senior Camila Rodriguez, junior Gahel Lezama Martinez and junior Chris Kalayil.

During the state send-off, they were greeted and honored by their peers and staff members during a parade, as they marched through the hallways of the school behind the Addison Trail Drum Line.

AT yearbook earns two recognitions

On April 10, 18 Addison Trail students attended the Northern Illinois Scholastic Press Association conference at College of DuPage. The participants are enrolled in the school’s Publications course and are members of Addison Trail’s yearbook, ATtribute, and/or student newspaper, Torch.

The 2024-25 ATtribute staff was awarded a blue ribbon for coverage and a silver certificate for the overall yearbook, which was titled “Out of the Blue.” Attendees also had the opportunity to attend a presentation by keynote speaker Renita Young, an award-winning broadcast financial journalist.

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Sports



Senior Charlie Roelle slides into home plate during Willowbrook's series opener against the Blazers. Roelle was called out on the play. (Photos by Chris Fox)

Warriors' winning streak hits 18 after extra-inning victory

Willowbrook closes out sweep of Addison Trail with road win

The Willowbrook baseball team raised its winning streak to 18 games after sweeping last week's three-game West Suburban Gold Conference series against Addison Trail. The Warriors completed the series sweep with a 7-4 eight-inning win in Addison on Friday, May 1. Willowbrook raised its conference record to 12-0 with that victory and pushed its overall season record to 19-4.

The Warriors will finish their conference season with this week's three-game series against Proviso East, followed by next week's three-game series with Morton.

In addition to playing the Pirates of Proviso East this week, Willowbrook will play a non-conference home game against Downers Grove North this Saturday, May 9.

The Warriors opened their conference series against Addison Trail with a 5-0 victory in Villa Park on April 28.

Willowbrook senior Noah Edison pitched a complete-game shutout in the series opener. Edison allowed four hits and no walks in seven innings in his victorious performance. He recorded two strikeouts.

Senior Jake Bonino went 2-for-4 and scored two runs for the Warriors, who scored one run in each of the first three innings and added two more runs in the fifth inning. Senior Charlie Roelle went 2-for-3 and scored one run. Senior Jory Crocker went 2-for-3 and drove in one run. Junior Alex Rodriguez went 2-for-2 with a pair of doubles.

One day after beating the Blazers in Villa Park, Willowbrook traveled to Addison Trail and earned a 5-3 win. Senior Bobby Biggs pitched the first four and one-third innings for the Warriors and allowed three runs, three hits and two walks while striking out five batters. Junior Ben Swanson then pitched one and two-third scoreless innings. Crocker took the mound for the bottom of the seventh inning and retired the side in order to earn a save.

Senior Ryan Dasbach went 1-for-3 and drove in two runs in Willowbrook's April 29 win at Addison Trail.



Senior shortstop Jory Crocker fires to first base for the final out of the Warriors' series opener against Addison Trail.

Swanson and senior Alek Ramey provided one RBI each.

The Warriors held a 4-1 lead over Addison Trail in Friday's series finale in Addison. The Blazers scored three runs in the bottom of the sixth inning to even the score at 4-4. Willowbrook scored three runs in the top of the eighth inning.

Crocker went 1-for-4 with a double that drove in the run that broke the 4-4 tie in the top of the eighth inning. He earned the win on the mound by pitching two scoreless innings to finish the game. Crocker allowed one hit and no walks while striking out three batters.

Senior Tommy Roelle went 2-for-4 and drove in two runs in Friday's extra-inning win. Dasbach went 1-for-3 and scored three runs. Junior Mikey Garner pitched the first two innings for Willowbrook and recorded six strikeouts while allowing one run, one hit and five walks.

Fox fires shutout for Broncos

Wills connects for two home runs during team's 4-0 victory



Montini sophomore Cameron Fox struck out 11 batters in Saturday's shutout win over Resurrection. She gave up four hits and one walk in seven innings during the Broncos' 4-0 victory. (Photo by Chris Fox)

The Montini Catholic softball team defeated Resurrection 4-0 on Saturday morning in Lombard.

The Broncos improved to 16-8 overall and 5-5 in the Girls Catholic Athletic Conference (GCAC) Red Division with the victory. Montini freshman Brooke Wills went 3-for-4 with a pair of solo home runs.

She homered to lead off the bottom of the first inning and give Montini a 1-0 lead.

Wills launched another home run in the bottom of the sixth inning to produce the final run of the game.

Junior Aubry Raffin went 3-for-4 and drove in two runs for the Broncos with her two-run double in the bottom of the fourth inning. Junior Bridget Ryan went 4-for-4 for Montini.

Sophomore pitcher Cameron Fox fired a complete game for the Broncos in Saturday's

See SOFTBALL, Page 15

Broncos receive their rings



The members of Montini Catholic High School's 2025 football team received their championship rings during Sunday's ceremony in the school's stadium. The Broncos posted a perfect 14-0 record while winning the IHSA Class 4A state title during the 2025 season. Montini beat Rochester 47-33 in the Class 4A championship game at Hancock Stadium on Nov. 28. The Broncos won the Class 3A state title in 2024, when they posted a 12-2 record. One photo from Sunday's event shows (left to right) juniors Johnny and Joey Neustadt with their championship rings. Another shows senior Chris Juda. (Submitted photos)

Warriors net first conference victory

Willowbrook's girls soccer team earned its first West Suburban Gold Conference win of the season when it defeated Proviso East 1-0 in Villa Park on April 28.

The Warriors improved their conference record to 1-2 with the victory.

Willowbrook honored its senior players before the match against the Pirates.

The seniors on the varsity team include: Aliyah Brockie, Miah Catania, Charlotte Lowe, Tabitha Smaczny and Heidi Urrietta Rosas.

The Warriors scored the only goal of the match when a shot caromed off a Proviso East player with about 27 minutes left in the first half.

The Warriors, who raised their overall season record to 4-7 with their win over Proviso East, will play conference matches at Leyden and Addison Trail this week.



Sophia Amin (left), Sophia Garcia (center) and Kennedy Rieger (6) celebrate after Willowbrook's goal in a 1-0 win over Proviso East on April 28. (Photo by Chris Fox)



Junior Aubry Raffin drove in two of Montini's runs during Saturday's 4-0 victory. Raffin recently connected for the 100th hit of her varsity career. She delivered that milestone hit in an April 21 win over Loyola Academy. (Photo by Chris Fox)

•Softball (From page 14)

win. She allowed four hits and one walk while recording 11 strikeouts in her victorious effort in the circle.

Two days before beating Resurrection, Montini earned a 13-3 five-inning GCAC Red Division home win over Loyola Academy in Lombard.

Fox pitched a complete game and allowed one earned run, three hits and three walks in five innings. She struck out nine batters.

Sophomore Danika Lucadello went 1-for-2 and drove in three runs for the Broncos, who scored six runs during the bottom of the third inning to take an 11-3 lead and closed out their victory with two runs in the bottom of the fifth inning.

Junior Alex Kalins went 1-for-3 with a double and drove in two runs.

Raffin also drove in two runs for the Broncos, who scored six runs during the bottom of the third inning to take an 11-3 lead and closed out their victory with two runs in the bottom of the fifth inning.

Montini's schedule this week includes GCAC Red Division games against Saint Laurence and Mother McAuley, along with a non-division contest against Saint Edward.

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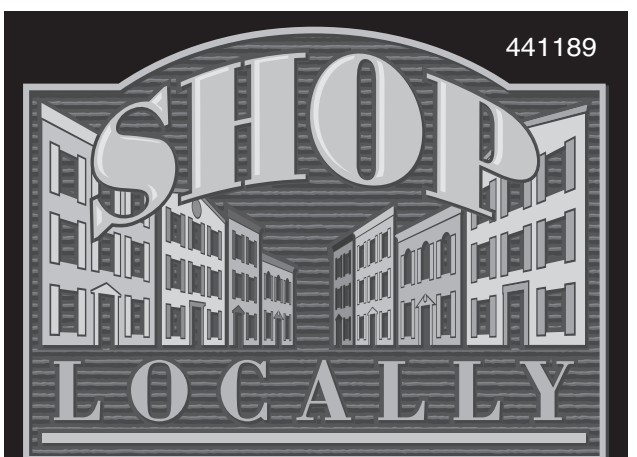
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The theme of Willowbrook High School's 2026 prom, which took place on Saturday night at Rate Field in Chicago, was "Midnight Masquerade." More than 500 students boarded buses at Willowbrook to travel to the prom. Pictured (left to right) are junior Isabelle Calderon and senior Korvyn Nieves. (Photo by Chris Fox)



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Downers Grove North girls track dominates Pariseau Invite, continues impressive spring

By GEOFFREY CLARK
Daily Herald Media Group

The Downers Grove North girls track and field team's only blemish so far in 2026 is losing one open meet. Otherwise, it's been all wins.

That includes Saturday's Sue Pariseau Invitational at Glenbard West, which it dominated from the start with a score of 123 despite not putting out its primary lineup.

"You start to mess around with things here and see what you got in different places," Downers Grove North coach Matt Maletich said. "So it wasn't the lineup you would put together if you were trying to win the biggest meet of the year or something."

Anna Grapenthian and Blake Weltler immediately set the Trojans up nicely in the long jump – the day's first event – by

placing first and second, respectively, with distances of 5.30 and 5.23 meters.

Perhaps the most exciting moment for the Trojans came when their 4x100-meter relay team of Aniya Hubbard, Charlotte Stanton, Ava Flynn and Averi Johnson won with a time of 49.56 seconds, just ahead of Lake Zurich's 49.59. Johnson, a freshman, was neck and neck with the Bears' London Chester for the final few meters before pulling off the victory.

"As we were approaching the last 50 meters, I could see that she was starting to tire a little bit," Johnson said. "And I was able to kind of put on the last bit of what I call my jets, and I was just able to push through really hard."

Johnson also was at the end of the Trojans' 4x200 relay victory alongside Stanton, Weltler and Adriana Mariscano in 1:45.98.

Geneva (86) finished second largely because of Alyssa Flotte, who won both the 100 hurdles and 300 hurdles, with respective times of 15.88 and 45.55. Also helping its cause were Sofia Borter winning the 3,200 in 10:59.39 and Taylor Peahl taking the 800 in 2:19.82.

"We compete against the best schools in the state," said the Wingate-bound Peahl. "We deserve to be here. We've been racing these times. We put in the effort, the work, the training, and we just have the same amount of chances as any other school has."

Naperville North (64) placed fourth after wins by Leah Davis in the 100 (12.65) and the 4x800 relay team of Eve Rowe, Sophia Schulz, Chloe Piot and Rianna Tandon (9:40.26).

Arisa Bisofa largely was responsible for Lake Zurich's fifth-place showing (61.5). After winning the discus with a

43.40, she claimed the shot put after scoring an 11.66. And yet, she wasn't about to gloss over the mistakes that she made.

"I was expecting a better day," Bisofa said. "I scratched a couple of my good throws, [which] fell out of the ring. Could have been better, but I'm very happy with what I got today."

Elianna Moody of Wheaton North (57) helped her team place sixth with a win in the triple jump (10.91).

Host Glenbard West (55) tied for seventh by winning the 4x400 relay – the meet's final event – in 4:12.99 behind Alexa Novak, Viki Hrdlicka, Nora Culbertson and Shayne Dietzen.

Willowbrook was ninth (39) after Rachel Simek finished third in the 800 in 2:25.45.

Gabrielle Falls got Wheaton Academy (16th place) on the board with a fifth-place finish in the long jump (4.93).

Former Willowbrook O-lineman Enrique Cruz Jr. selected by San Francisco

By JOSHUA WELGE
jwelge@shawmedia.com

Former Willowbrook offensive lineman Enrique Cruz Jr., who played for five collegiate seasons at Syracuse and Kansas, was selected on Saturday by

the San Francisco 49ers in the fifth round of the NFL Draft with the 179th overall pick.

Cruz was an All-State lineman as a junior at Willowbrook in 2019, helping lead the Warriors to an 11-2 record and the Class 7A quarterfinals.

Cruz was at Syracuse for four seasons, where he started 18 games.

He transferred to Kansas in 2025, where he started all 12 games at right tackle and earned All-Big 12 Honorable Mention honors.

Cruz reached the fastest top speed

(20.69 mph) of any offensive lineman who ran the 40-yard dash at this year's NFL Combine, according to Next Gen Stats. He also ranked among the top two O-lineman in the vertical (35 inches) and broad jump (9 feet, 8 inches).

We'd like to *point* something out to you



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