

THE Beacon-News

\$2.00 | WEDNESDAY, MARCH 19, 2025 | AURORABEACONNEWS.COM

EAST AURORA SCHOOL DISTRICT

Board selects Halverson as new superintendent

‘This is a full circle East Aurora moment’

By Molly Morrow
Beacon-News

Robert Halverson is the new superintendent of East Aurora School District 131, following the school board’s approval of his appointment on Monday. He began work on Tuesday, and will co-lead the district with outgoing Superintendent Jennifer Norrell until June 30, when Norrell leaves to work as superintendent of Homewood-Flossmoor High School District 233 in the south suburbs, according to a press release from the district. Halverson has been working as

the district’s executive director of Finance and Grants for the past eight months before being chosen as superintendent, he said. Before that, he worked at West Aurora School District 129, as the assistant director of Grants and Accountability and previously as the principal of Goodwin Elementary School in North Aurora, according to the release. He started his career as a physical education and fourth-grade teacher in the East Aurora School District. Addressing the board on Monday, Halverson credited Thomas Hartman, who attended the meeting, for hiring him to work at Bardwell Elementary School in the district in 2003. “He took the chance on me as an educator,” Halverson said

about Hartman, who he said later encouraged Halverson to become an administrator. Halverson said his mom and grandparents attended East Aurora schools, and Halverson himself attended the district through sixth grade. His wife, Ruby Halverson, whom he met when they taught together at Bardwell, is an assistant principal in the West Aurora School District, according to West Aurora’s website. They have three sons, Monday’s release said. “I always had goals to continue to work at East Aurora,” Halverson told The Beacon-News, saying that when he left the district, it had been “land-locked” and that he hadn’t been able to get on at



Robert Halverson speaks to those in attendance at the East Aurora School District board meeting Monday night after being approved as the district’s new superintendent. **MOLLY MORROW/BEACON-NEWS**

Turn to School, Page 2



A crowd fills the stands at Northwestern Medicine Field in Geneva during a game between the Kane County Cougars and the Lake County DockHounds in 2022. The team, which was recently sold to REV Entertainment, will keep playing in Geneva, officials said. **H. RICK BAMMAN/FOR BEACON-NEWS**

REV Entertainment buys Kane County Cougars

Team to continue playing in Geneva

By Molly Morrow
Beacon-News

The Kane County Cougars are being sold to REV Entertainment, the company announced on Monday, with the baseball team to keep playing at its longtime home in Geneva. Following approval by the Forest Preserve District of Kane County, which owns the team’s stadium, the American Association of Professional Baseball – the league the Cougars are part of –

approved the sale of the team last week, according to a news release from REV Entertainment. This is REV’s second American Association franchise, according to Monday’s statement from the Arlington, Texas-based sports and entertainment company. It became the majority ownership partner of the Cleburne Railroaders, who play in Cleburne, Texas, in 2023. Bob Froehlich, who owned the Kane County Cougars for more than 10 years until the sale was finalized, said in a statement on Monday that REV Entertainment officials are “baseball people,” and that it is a company

that “understands what it takes to successfully operate minor league franchises.” He noted REV’s experience managing events at Globe Life Field, home of Major League Baseball’s Texas Rangers, as well as at the Rangers’ former stadium. “REV’s proven track record in baseball and live events positions them perfectly to build upon the Cougars’ rich tradition and ensure continued success for years to come,” Joshua Schaub, commissioner of the American Association of Professional Baseball, said in Monday’s announcement from REV.

Froehlich will no longer act as the team’s chairman, CEO and president, according to the team’s vice president and general manager Curtis Haug, though he expects Froehlich to continue attending games and sharing expertise with the team’s new owner. Haug said he anticipates REV will select the team’s new chairman, CEO and president, although the details are yet to be announced. Froehlich’s reasons for deciding to sell the team were personal, according to Haug.

Turn to Cougars, Page 3

WEST AURORA SCHOOL DISTRICT

Support staff to get raises

Pay increase part of new five-year contract

By Linda Girardi
Beacon-News

West Aurora School District 129’s union office support staff will receive raises under a new five-year contract recently approved by the district’s board. The West Aurora school board recently approved the collective bargaining agreement with the West Aurora Office Professionals Union that represents approximately 100 workers in the district. The agreement for clerical workers is effective July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2030. Under terms of the contract, support staff will receive a \$2 hourly wage increase plus a stipend based on the years of service to the district in the first year of the contract in 2025-26, West Aurora Director of Finance Ryan Abrahamson said in a summary of the terms. In each of the next two years, office staff will receive 6% hourly wage increases. Then, in the final two years of the contract – 2028-29 and 2029-30 – office workers will receive 2.5% hourly wage increases plus a hike set at half of the Consumer Price Index inflation rate. “This is a culmination of some hard work and more importantly collaboration,” West Aurora Associate Superintendent of Operations Angie Smith told the board. West Aurora Office Professional Association President Stacy Krisch recognized members of the union’s negotiating team. “Through countless hours of preparation, we were able to present concrete ideas to the district negotiation team in what I believe to be the fastest negotiation process in history – a whopping three meetings,” Kirsch said.

Turn to Raises, Page 2



Dick Jensen, from left, Jay Wenstrup and Fred Ng, who are all members of the Tennis Bums, click rackets March 3 after playing a game of tennis at Five Star Tennis in Plainfield. **TESS KENNY/FOR NAPERVILLE SUN**

Tennis Bums show age is but a number

By Tess Kenny
Naperville Sun

It was 2017 when Richard Wolff met the Tennis Bums. The Elgin native was playing a round of singles at Naperville’s Nike Park when he came across the group. “They said, ‘Hey, you want to play tennis? You look like you’re old enough,’” Wolff said, flashing a grin. Eight years later, he’s still playing with them. The Tennis Bums have been a local staple for more than two decades. A community tennis group with a 4.0 rating by U.S. Tennis Association standards, it boasts members from Naperville and surrounding suburbs.

The catch: members are, at their youngest, in their 60s. The oldest Bums are in their 90s. “It’s a great, great group, you know?” Wolff, 77, said. “We aspire to play well but, hey, we aspire to play.” Speaking on a Monday morning earlier this month, Wolff stood beside a few of his fellow Bums after a couple hours of play at Plainfield’s Five Star Tennis. On any given Monday, Wednesday or Friday, that’s where you’ll find the Tennis Bums – scuffling around a few courts from 8 to 10 a.m. on the dot. That’s their well-worn routine these days, members say. “It was a great find,” Wolff said. “I don’t know of any other groups like this.” The Tennis Bums date back to

2003. It was founded by then-Naperville resident Richard Hutter. The group started out of a senior tennis match that Hutter organized among friends at the Vaughan Tennis Center in Aurora, he said. By word of mouth, the group caught on and today totals 22 members. For years, the Tennis Bums played at Vaughan through the winter months and at various outdoor courts – from Naperville North High School to Nike Park – in the summers. But lately, Five Star has been their go-to spot year-round. Five Star co-owner Robin Henders said he’ll never forget the first day he met the Bums.

Turn to Tennis, Page 3

NWS: Straight-line winds damaging to church

By Gloria Casas
Chicago Tribune

Straight-line winds — not a tornado or microburst — are the likely cause of the damage done to the roof of First United Methodist Church in Elgin by a storm that moved through the area Friday night, the National Weather Service said.

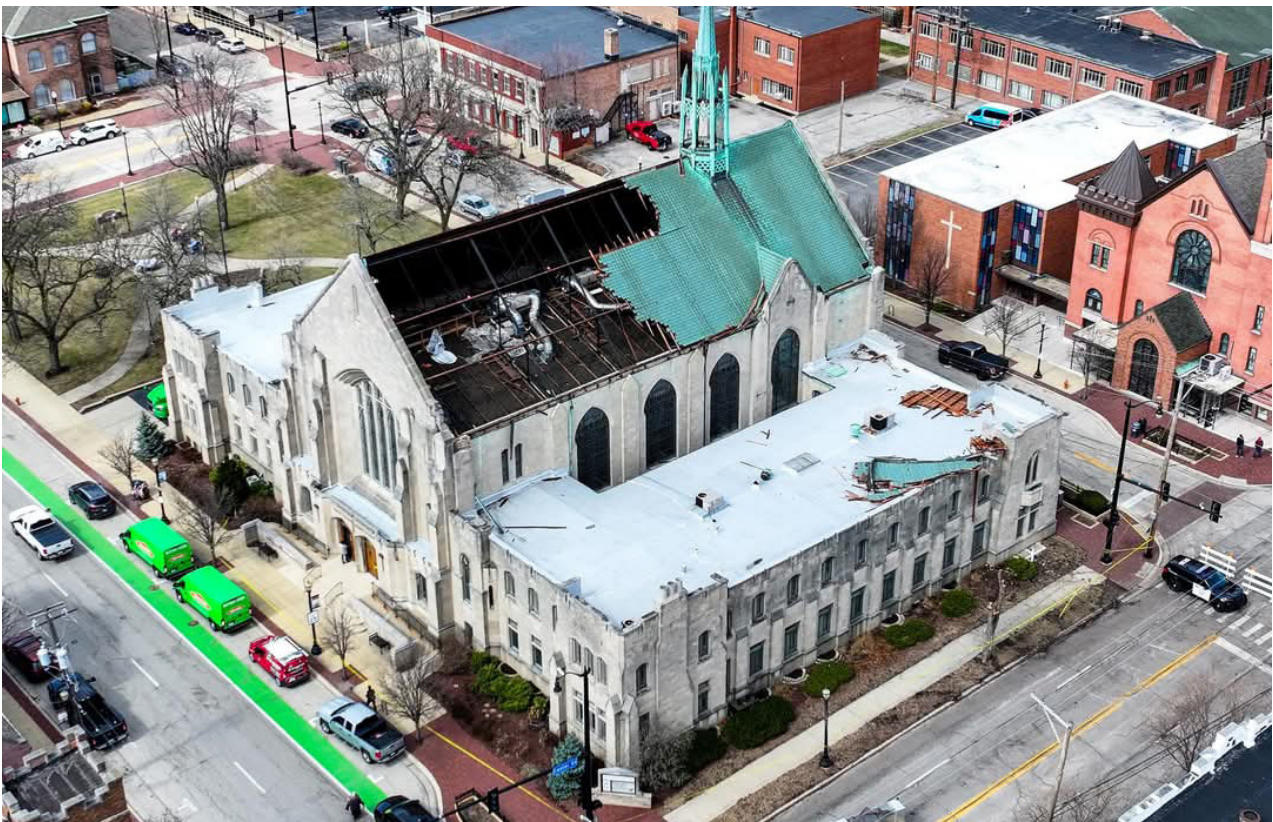
“There’s no conclusive evidence it was a tornado in downtown Elgin,” National Weather Service meteorologist Ricky Castro said. “We surveyed the area, and it was basically inconclusive what caused that roof to be lifted from the church.”

A tornado usually has a path of destruction, but investigators assessing the aftermath of the scene didn’t find that type of damage, Castro said.

“There was not enough evidence to rule tornadic damage. That doesn’t mean there wasn’t (one), but there wasn’t enough evidence to confirm it,” he said.

An early spring low-pressure system led to a severe weather outbreak across the country’s central, southern, and eastern areas, according to the NWS. The storm spawned a handful of brief EF-0 tornadoes in Bartlett, Hanover Park and Yorkville, Castro said.

In Elgin and the surrounding area, winds exceeding 50 mph were reported, he said.



National Weather Service investigators believe straight-line winds — not a tornado or microburst — damaged the copper roof of First United Methodist Church in Elgin Friday night. Sunday services will be held at Cornerstone United Methodist Church while repair work is done, officials said. **FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH IN ELGIN**

The Kane County Office of Emergency Management is seeking the public’s help in assessing storm damage to determine if the county qualifies for federal disaster assistance, county officials said.

Homeowners, renters and businesses can get more information and file a report at laserfiche.kanecountyil.gov/Forms/Tornado-Response.

Although First United at 216 E. Highland Ave. lost just part of its copper roof, the entire span will need to be replaced and damage to the building’s interior repaired. The total cost of the damage is not yet known, said Victoria Rebeck, director of communications for the

Northern Illinois Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church.

A company that has experience with historic buildings and churches damaged by natural disasters has been hired to do the repair work, Rebeck said. They plan to use shrink wrapping instead of tarp to cover the roof in the interim to provide better

weatherproofing, she said.

The church is still making repairs from a pipe burst on the building’s third floor three months ago, she added.

Last Sunday’s service was held online via Zoom but from this Sunday on they will be using recently closed Cornerstone United Methodist Church at 41W170

Russell Road, Rebeck said.

However, they’ll be able to continue the church’s ministries, like its soup kettle, at the Highland Avenue location, Rebeck said.

The church has received a lot of support from the community, she said.

“It’s been gratifying that so many of the neighbors showed interest and stopped by,” Rebeck said. “It’s meant a lot to (the congregation).”

Bishop Dan Schwerin, leader of the Northern Illinois-Wisconsin Episcopal Area of The United Methodist Church, expressed gratitude for “the ways that God has brought resilience in the face of this storm from (lead pastor) Rev. Dr. Felicia LaBoy, her congregation and the connection of The United Methodist Church.

“First United Methodist Church of Elgin has been a good neighbor for many years, and their neighbors are responding in kind with the love and mutual benefit we know in Christ,” he said in a statement.

“We are so grateful that there was no loss of life. These are the moments we consider the lilies and trust that God will provide clothing for this ministry and sustaining love and power for the days ahead,” Schwerin said.

Gloria Casas is a freelance reporter for The Courier-News.

BRIDGE

Both vulnerable, South deals

| | | | |
|--------------|------------------|-------------|------------|
| North | | East | |
| ♠ 6 4 2 | ♥ Q 7 5 | ♠ J 9 8 | ♥ 6 4 2 |
| ♦ K J 10 7 | ♣ 8 7 6 | ♦ 5 4 2 | ♣ 10 5 3 2 |
| South | | | |
| ♠ A Q 3 | ♥ A K J 10 9 8 3 | | |
| ♦ A | ♣ A 4 | | |

North’s three-heart bid, rather than a jump to four hearts, showed a hand that was not completely “broke”. South’s three-spade cue bid was a request for North to show any feature of his hand that might be useful in a slam. North’s decision to bid four diamonds was the key to reaching this excellent slam. From South’s perspective, three low hearts and the king of diamonds would give him some play for slam, and North might have more than that. The queen

| The bidding: | | | |
|--------------|----------|-------|------|
| South | West | North | East |
| 2♣ | Pass | 2♦ | Pass |
| 2♥ | Pass | 3♥ | Pass |
| 3♠ | Pass | 4♦ | Pass |
| 5♠ | Pass | 5♥ | Pass |
| 6♥ | All pass | | |

Opening lead: King of ♣

of hearts, the queen of diamonds, even the jack of spades would increase his chances for twelve tricks.

South won the opening club lead with his ace, cashed the ace of hearts and the ace of diamonds, and led the three of hearts to dummy’s seven. He cashed the king of diamonds to discard his club loser, and then ran the jack of diamonds, discarding a low spade. He planned to return to dummy later with the queen of hearts to discard his queen of spades on the 10 of diamonds. West took the jack of diamonds with his queen and led another diamond. East ruffed the 10 of diamonds and South over-ruffed. He led a heart to dummy’s queen and took the spade finesse, finishing down one. South had a good idea but he should have been a little more patient. Instead of cashing the king of diamonds, South should have led the 10, discarding his low club on that card. East would not be able to ruff a diamond and South could enjoy two discards after drawing trumps.

— Bob Jones, Tribune Content Agency

Kane County Health Department to host child abuse prevention events

Staff report

In the coming weeks, the Kane County Health Department will host a series of events meant to raise awareness about child abuse and educate the community on child safety, a press release from Kane County said.

April is Child Abuse Prevention Month, according to the state of Illinois, and the county is planning a series of programs centered

around child abuse awareness and prevention.

On March 28, the county is holding its monthly behavioral health training from 9 to 11 a.m., which will discuss the work of child advocacy centers, the release said. The webinar will include Spanish interpretation, and individuals can register at https://us06web.zoom.us/j/6FbE8A0DS6STHMNT_hGJ9Q#registration.

The Kane County Health Department is also support-

ing the national “Wear Blue Day” for child abuse prevention on April 4, according to the release, and will be posting resources and prevention strategies on its Facebook page throughout April.

The department is also planting a pinwheel garden to show support for child abuse prevention in partnership with the Woman’s Club of Aurora at the department’s office at 1240 N. Highland Ave. in Aurora.

School

from Page 1

the time as an administrator. “My goal to finish up my career was always to be the superintendent at East Aurora.”

The school board sought input from parents, staff and students in the search for a new superintendent, according to the release. They contracted the firm BWP Associates to do a national search for the position. Halverson said he applied in December and began interviewing in February.

Now, as superintendent, Halverson said he wants to focus on academic growth — helping students working below grade level catch up,

to “move them a year-and-a-half worth of growth on an annual basis so we can help close that gap.”

He’s also interested in continuing to foster collaboration among central office administrators, principals, teachers and union leadership, as well as expanding partnerships with local nonprofits and businesses for mental health support, youth programming, career and technical education and other services.

Norrell has worked as East Aurora’s superintendent since 2018, according to the district. She will be taking the helm as superintendent of Homewood-Flossmoor High School District 233 beginning July 1, according to past reporting.

East Aurora school board member Bruce Schubert credited Norrell with spearheading a number of recent efforts in the district, including millions spent in building improvements to keep up with neighboring districts, expanding access to Advanced Placement classes and boosting the district’s reputation.

“One of the things I think East Aurora has really struggled with for a long time is its image. You have really changed that for us in so many ways — your professionalism, your knowledge, expertise, the way you conduct yourself,” Schubert said of Norrell at Monday’s meeting.

Halverson returned recently to work at East Aurora after a number of

years at other districts, and is now moving up from his current administrative role to be superintendent. Norrell, who will co-lead the district with Halverson until she begins her new job, is returning to the south suburbs where she grew up. And Brian Moreno, a graduate of East Aurora in 2014, was appointed to the district’s school board at Monday’s meeting, too.

“It’s really about everybody coming home tonight,” Annette Johnson, president of the East Aurora school board, said at Monday’s meeting. “This is a full circle East Aurora moment, right?”

*mmorrow
@chicagotribune.com*

THE

Beacon-News

Par Ridder, General Manager

EDITORIAL
Dan Cassidy
Managing Editor
630-978-8149
dcassidy@tribpub.com

Bill Scheibe
Suburban Sports Editor
bscheibe@tribpub.com
General: 630-978-8149

ADVERTISING
Display: 312-283-7056
Classified: 866-399-0537 or suburban.class@tribpub.com
Obituaries: 312-222-2222 or suburban.obit@tribpub.com
Legals: suburban.legal@tribpub.com

The Beacon-News is published by Tribune Publishing. Direct all

inquiries to Tribune Publishing 1000 Albion Avenue, Schaumburg, IL 60193-4549.

CUSTOMER SERVICE & NEW SUBSCRIBERS
630-230-1197
abnservice@tribpub.com

New subscriber starts require an email address. All subscriptions include up to 14 Premium Issues per year. For each Premium Issue, your account balance will be charged an additional fee up to \$9.99 in the billing period when the section publishes. This will result in shortening the length of your billing period.

Raises

from Page 1

“We collaborated, compromised together and came up with new ideas and ways to strengthen and improve our bargaining unit.”

The union leader recognized the district’s negotiating team and the school board for its leadership.

“We thank the district negotiation team and the West Aurora School Board for your support of the West Aurora Office Professional Association and your

dedication to ensuring we have the highest standards of working conditions in the area,” Kirsch said.

“West Aurora has become the leader for office professionals across the area with this new contract,” Kirsch said. “We are thrilled with the overall positive reaction from our membership as well.”

Only three days of negotiations “doesn’t happen without organization,” Smith said, in recognizing the union negotiating team.

“A huge kudos to you and your team for having

worked through all those things ahead of time so we make really productive use of our time. We did come up with some creative things that will help with some other unions as we negotiate down the road,” Smith said.

“This does position us well,” she said. “We realize that often-times our office professionals are the first people that our students see and the first people parents deal with. It’s really important to us that we honor them as the valuable members of our team that they are but also

that we put some things in place to ensure the training that they need, the mentorship that they need are all there to make sure we can keep our team solid.”

Smith recognized the district’s negotiating team as well.

“This really was a very collaborative process. We are excited to be done this far ahead. It is March and we already have an agreement for July 1,” Smith said.

Linda Girardi is a freelance reporter for The Beacon-News.

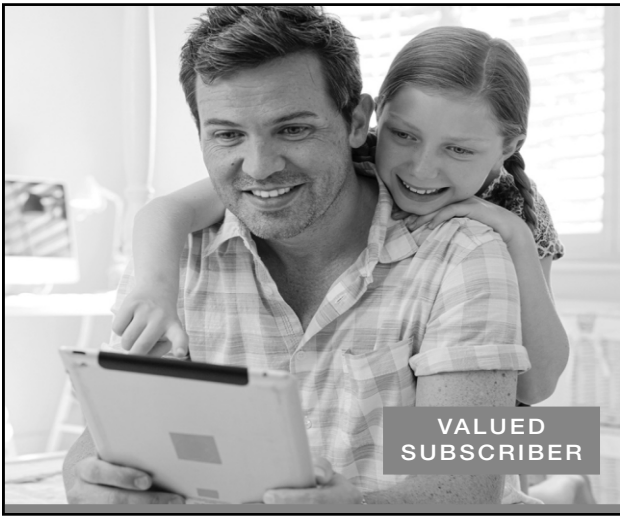


LOTTERY NUMBERS

For yesterday’s numbers and recent drawings, go to chicagotribune.com/lottery or use your mobile device to scan the code at left.

SUBMISSIONS, NEWS TIPS, QUESTIONS

Submit your event: chicagotribune.com/things-to-do
Share a news tip: Your local reporters would love to hear from you. Find all contact information at chicagotribune.com/about/chi-suburbs-contact-us-htmlstory.html
All other questions: suburbs@tribpub.com



Get more out of your subscription by setting up your digital account

- More articles than what’s in print
- Breaking News alerts with the mobile app
- Unlimited access to our website
- eNewspaper, a digital replica of the paper emailed daily

It’s easy to start your online access!
Visit: go-activate.com



VALUED
SUBSCRIBER