

8th grader questions bus service

Presses company officials on what they've done to improve arrival times

By Michelle Mullins
Chicago Tribune

As representatives from Safeway Transportation Services Corp. fielded questions from Summit Hill Elementary District 161 officials on the botched busing situation for the start of the school year, eighth grade student Kimora Franklin calmly spoke from the

dais. "One of my peers last week, they came to school at least an hour and 30 minutes late," said Kimora, one of two eighth graders appointed a student board member. "So what have you guys done to really fix that?" Michael Comstock, regional manager with Safeway, replied that while he wasn't sure on that

particular incident, he will send the district the buses' GPS arrival times. "I hear you loud and clear," Comstock said. "So thank you for that." Parents and district administrators in the district, which serves areas in Mokena, Frankfort and Tinley Park, have been frustrated with their bus service since school began last month. They have said buses failed to show up at stops. In some cases, the buses arrived too early, causing students to miss the bus. Other

parents said they waited nearly two hours for the bus to pick their children up in the mornings. In the afternoon, some buses returned to school hours after the school day and parents received a text to pick their children up. "All of this placed our students, their families and our staff and the district in an unsafe and inappropriate position to start the school year," Superintendent Paul McDermott said. Earlier this month, Safeway CEO and founder Lucky Sahota took full responsibility for the

rocky start to the school year, and district officials asked him to return Wednesday to answer additional questions. McDermott said families deserve reliable transportation. While many issues have been resolved, some bus routes are still too long, he said, and they are working on reducing routes longer than 40 minutes. He said he is "cautiously optimistic." "It is better; it's not perfect,"

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Bernard Streit, of Palos Park, works on a nuts and bolts frame under the supervision of volunteer Boller "Bo" Boll in the Shirley Ryan Ability Lab at Silver Cross Hospital in New Lenox. SILVER CROSS HOSPITAL

Mokena man volunteers at Silver Cross Hospital

Facility is where virtual quadriplegic recovered from near paralysis

By Melinda Moore
For Daily Southtown

A Mokena man's amazing recovery from not being able to use his arms and legs to walking out of the hospital just weeks later inspired him to volunteer with the physical therapists who helped him. Boller "Bo" Boll became a virtual quadriplegic in 2023 because of Guillain-Barre syndrome. He turned to the Shirley Ryan Ability Lab at Silver Cross Hospital in New Lenox to build his inner core and muscles. "I guess we'll have to say from

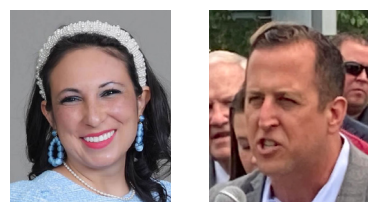
the day I got into Silver Cross Hospital until the day I walked out of there was 39 days," Boll said. "I came into Silver Cross as a total quadriplegic and walked out of there 39 days later. I had some incredible therapists and nurses." Gratitude for his recovery and with a solid background in service from attending Catholic schools and volunteering as a firefighter/EMT for 20 years, Boll decided to get involved at the ability lab. "It's just in my nature to give back. I felt that from the position I was in - totally paralyzed - to walking out of the hospital, I owed them something," he

shared. It also was a way of keeping him "out of trouble - it gives you something to do so you won't be sitting in your garage." Boll, a union carpenter with 45 years in the field before retiring as a construction superintendent, is "an avid woodworker with a well-equipped shop as well as a fair metalworking shop," he said. He saw an opportunity in being able to enhance, replace or modify items in the ability lab to better suit patients. He built a device to improve finger dexterity that has four threaded rods in a vertical position with threaded nuts that

patients run up and down the device. "I've probably redesigned six or eight different things that I felt were working far more than what some factory put out," he said. One important piece of equipment that received a makeover was a step platform used by people to regain mobility while using a walker. "They had a step that was 8.5 inches high, but a step in normal circumstances is 7 to 7.5 inches. It was a platform they had that was 24 inches wide, which is

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19TH DISTRICT SENATE



Gasca Hastings

Lowering property taxes a key issue

By Mike Nolan
Daily Southtown

Both candidates seeking to represent the 19th District in the Illinois Senate say high property taxes are a top concern of voters in a district that takes in several south and southwest suburban communities. Michael Hastings, 43, D-Frankfort, first began serving in the Senate in 2013 and is facing Samantha Jean Gasca, 37, of New Lenox, in the November election.

Gasca was one of three candidates in the Republican primary in March while Hastings was unopposed on the Democratic side. Hastings said boosting state funding to education will help reduce the reliance by school districts on property taxes. "Given that 80% to 85% of property taxes are levied by local school districts and community colleges, state funding plays a critical role in easing the financial pressures faced by school boards," he said. Hastings said he has been a proponent of the state's evidence-based funding model, which aims to equalize school funding across districts and do away with disparities between well-funded and underfunded districts. "This model is key to creating a more equitable education system where all students have access to quality opportunities, regardless of their background," he said. Gasca said there are seniors in her district paying \$10,000 a year in property taxes, with much of the money going to school districts although their children are grown and out of the school system.

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INSIDE

Execs sentenced for Medicare fraud

The two top executives of a Matteson foundation that provided mental health counseling for children have been sentenced to federal prison for defrauding the state's Medicaid program of \$2.5 million over several years. Page 2

AROUND SOUTHLAND Beverly Art Walk offers artist crafts

About 150 artists will share their craft during the 11th annual Beverly Art Walk from noon to 5 p.m. Sept. 28 in the Beverly and Morgan Park neighborhoods of Chicago. Page 3

MARIANNE MATTHEWS 1944-2024

Sandburg teacher had love for written word, theater



Marianne Matthews taught for 35 years. MARY BETH HARPER

By Bob Goldsborough
Chicago Tribune

Marianne Matthews taught English, theater and speech for 35 years at Carl Sandburg High School in Orland Park, where she also directed many student theater productions. "She was the first of many fantastic English teachers I had at Sandburg who helped me hone my writing skills and become a better communicator," said Kim Singletary, a 1997 Sandburg graduate. Matthews, 80, died of natural causes Sept. 5 at the University of Chicago Hospitals, said her niece, Mary Beth Harper. She

was a longtime La Grange resident. Born in Dubuque, Iowa, Matthews was adopted by Anna and Steve Zern. She grew up in Joliet and graduated from St. Francis Academy in Joliet, which now is part of Joliet Catholic Academy. Matthews received a bachelor's degree from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and a master's degree from the U. of I., her family said. She began teaching English, theater and speech classes at Sandburg in 1966. Her primary aims, former students said, included instilling in her students a love for

the written word, a confidence when speaking publicly, and a keen love for the work of William Shakespeare. "She taught confidence, public speaking, research and deep thought into subjects and instilled a work ethic that I still use daily - and always will," said Vikki Duke, a 1997 Sandburg graduate who went on to teach for five years in the Palos School District 118. "The impact on her students is immeasurable." Singletary recalled that during her freshman honors English class, Matthews taught students Shakespearean curse words, tell-

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Execs for Matteson mental health foundation to get prison for Medicaid fraud

By Mike Nolan
Daily Southtown

The two top executives of a Matteson foundation that provided mental health counseling for children have been sentenced to federal prison for defrauding the state's Medicaid program of \$2.5 million over several years.

Summer Matheson, 46, and Terrence Ewing, 62, husband and wife and both of Chicago, were sentenced Sept. 12 by U.S. District Judge John Robert Blakey after pleading guilty to fraud charges in August 2023.

Matheson received a term of 6 years and Ewing 4½ years.

An employee of the foundation, Richard Grundy, 39, of Chicago, was sentenced by Blakey in February to 3 years and 1 month in prison.

Matheson was secretary and chief operating officer of Laynie Foundation Inc., and her husband, Ewing, was president and chief executive officer.

The three, from 2011 until 2018, fraudulently billed the state Medicaid program, saying they were providing more mental health counseling than they actually did, according to prosecutors.

They also used the foundation to get Medicaid money for nonreimburs-

able activities such as staff training and clinical supervision, according to the government.

Patient records were also falsified and Laynie Foundation employees were told to assist in the fraud, with those following the commands from their bosses getting promotions and other perks, according to a court filing.

In one court filing in early April, Matheson and Ewing said they have two sons, ages 11 and 17, and asked that they be sentenced to staggered terms, so that one parent could continue to care for them.

Prosecutors said they were not opposed to that, but it was not clear if Blakey's sentenced provided for that.

Their attorney said the "family is indigent and lacks the resources to implement sufficient safeguards for their sons" if they were to be separated from their parents.

In asking that Matheson be sentenced to a term of 4¼ years, prosecutors said in early February that the couple used the Medicaid money they'd obtained through the fraud to buy an Audi and Porsche, spend thousands of dollars on game tickets and merchandise for the Bears and Bulls, and spent more than \$40,000 on travel.

Senate

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She said some of the biggest property tax increases have been felt in the eastern portion of the 19th, particularly in Rich Township. Gasca said residents have seen bills jump following a reassessment of property.

She said on her website school districts engage in needless and reckless spending, such as "extreme salaries to administrative officials."

Gasca told the Daily Southtown she's not directly accusing school districts of reckless spending, but that "independent audits of school districts by an external private auditor" are needed to "see if there is reckless spending."

Outside audits shouldn't be limited to school districts, with municipal governments also undergoing scrutiny for how taxpayer money is spent, Gasca said.

She said she is a proponent of "zero-balance" budgeting for all local governments, meaning that each year they start from scratch to create a new spending plan rather than

duplicating or increasing the prior year budget.

It will be the second time in the past two elections where Hastings has faced a general election challenger after Lockport Republican Patrick Sheehan conceded a very close race in 2022. Sheehan was appointed to fill a state representative seat earlier this year.

The district includes all or parts of Country Club Hills, Frankfort, Hazel Crest, Homewood, Joliet, Lockport, Matteson, New Lenox, Oak Forest, Orland Park and Tinley Park.

Hastings earned a bachelor's of science degree in leadership and management at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, and a master's in business administration from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He has a law degree from John Marshall Law School in Chicago.

He served in the Army and was deployed to Iraq following the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

Gasca said she earned her master of divinity and pastoral studies degrees in 2021 from Moody Theological Seminary.

She worked as a prison chaplain at Sheridan

Correctional Center, a medium security men's prison about 70 miles west of Chicago, and said she has worked with the homeless and people with substance abuse issues.

Gasca lost a bid for school board in 2022 in New Lenox Elementary District 122.

On her website, Gasca said "maintaining the purity" of the U.S. Constitution is a priority for her, particularly the Second Amendment right to keep and bear firearms.

Talking with the Daily Southtown, she said things such as obtaining a Firearm Owners Identification Card can be an obstacle for 19th District residents who want to own a gun.

"It's a privilege in the U.S. Constitution," Gasca said. "There should not be this added level of permission."

Still, Gasca said she believes that some people should not be able to carry a firearm.

"I don't know exactly how we go about doing this, but consider how people with known, severe mental health issues" can gain access to firearms, she said.

Gasca said she is not entirely fluent in state laws and regulations on that and

other issues, but said "I am open to learning, open to the conversation."

Hastings said supporting police, firefighters and other first responders is a priority, and he favors having zero-dollar co-pays for mental health treatments specifically for first responders, "ensuring they have access to crucial support without financial barriers."

State campaign finance disclosure reports show Gasca's campaign took in \$700 in contributions during the April-June quarter, and at the end of June she had just under \$1,100 available to spend.

For Hastings, receipts in the April-June period totaled nearly \$21,400. Expenses for the quarter were \$64,500, and at the end of the period the campaign had nearly \$338,000 available to spend.

Since then, however, Hastings' campaign has seen contributions in excess of \$166,000, according to disclosure filings, with most of the donations coming from organized labor.

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Mokena

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just about the width of the walker. If you put a walker on it and move in either direction, the walker would fall off it," he explained.

"We built a platform that was 32-by-36 that was 7-inches high. They could walk across it actually and step down again," he said. "The other day that therapist asked me if I could build a ramp. I said I think so, so I built a ramp to match the platform that we have. It worked out pretty good."

Boll volunteers two or three hours a day two or three days a week at the ability lab, working both with equipment and with patients.

One of his favorite things to do is "to talk to the therapists and see how they are doing, and talk to a couple of patients if they want me to," he said.

"We're just getting started with this so we're feeling the program out," he said. "It's kind of new to the therapists to have some-

one like me come on board. A few therapists have said 'I have a patient. I'd like you to meet him.'"

One of those patients was a somewhat despondent 85-year-old man who had fallen three days earlier.

"He was not happy about falling and breaking his hip. He's a part-time woodworker and we started talking about that," Boll said. "If I can bring a little cheer to somebody, that makes me happy."

Although he is grateful for the many employees at Silver Cross who helped him recover, Boll also has another important person on his team: his wife, Sandy, a teacher who took time off from her job.

"Sandy was there around the clock," he said. "She'd come in at 6 a.m. and feed me and go to school and come back at 4:30 or 5 with new clothes and do some class lessons until 8:30 or 9 and then she'd do it again the next day."

Sandy Boll said she and Bo met in 1998 and have been married since March 2022, but they've had many

health crises, including Bo's triple bypass open-heart surgery and a hospitalization after shoulder surgery when he developed blood clots.

"Luckily, he must have nine lives as he negotiated a successful recovery each time," she said. "Throughout his many surgeries and hospitalizations he has always remained positive and persevered in therapy to recover."

She called Guillain-Barre syndrome the toughest hurdle yet.

"The process necessary to make a diagnosis and then the uncertainty surrounding the length of his recovery must have weighed heavily on him as he lay in bed daily," she shared. "I did my best to remain positive and we both refused to believe that he wouldn't make a full recovery. We trusted the doctors and therapists, and Bo really pushed himself to improve daily."

She said the hospital's therapy team, floor supervisor, nurses, assistants and doctors were amazing in analyzing, researching

and creating a plan for Bo's recovery.

"The entire team stayed positive and motivated him to continue even when there initially was little improvement," she said. "Choosing where to receive therapy was a difficult decision to make. We are blessed that we made the right choice. Without this great group of people I doubt he would have recovered so quickly and completely. They're miracle workers!"

She said Bo's experience with the ability lab can help others. "Much of his recovery process was dependent on his mental attitude. Bo understands how it feels to be the patient and also knows how important it is to trust your doctors and therapists even when recovery is slow," she explained.

"He wants to help others who may be in the same position he was once in to adapt and persevere and provide hope and support as they work through their recovery."

Melinda Moore is a freelance reporter for Daily Southtown.

BRIDGE

East-West vulnerable, South deals

North
♠ 6 5 4
♥ A Q 7
♦ 8 7 4
♣ A Q J 8

West

♠ K 10 8
♥ 8 5 4 3
♦ Q 9 3
♣ 10 7 5

East

♠ 7 3 2
♥ K J 10
♦ K J 10 2
♣ 6 4 3

South
♠ A Q J 9
♥ 9 6 2
♦ A 6 5
♣ K 9 2

Today's deal is from a team match played recently in Toronto, Canada. North did not want to jump in no trump at his first turn with two unstopped suits and good support for partner, so he bided his time with a one diamond response. South's rebid showed a balanced minimum and did not deny a four-card major. North simply raised to game.

At the other table, West chose to lead a spade and declarer had an easy time taking nine tricks. He actually made an overtrick when East had trouble discarding. At this table, West was Michal Klukowski, originally from Poland but currently living in Switzerland. Still

in his 20's, Klukowski has a fist full of World Championships to his name. A case can be made that he is the best player in the world at this time.

Klukowski led a heart and East captured dummy's queen with his king. East shifted to the jack of diamonds, ducked by declarer, and continued with a low diamond to Klukowski's queen when declarer ducked this also. Had Klukowski continued diamonds the contact would have succeeded, but he accurately reverted to hearts. Declarer had to accept down one when the spade finesse failed. Very nice defense! Declarer could have made his contract by playing dummy's ace of hearts at trick one and then taking the spade finesse. Would you have found that play?

— Bob Jones
Tribune Content Agency

Matthews

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ing her class that "they're so much more interesting than regular curse words."

"Not only was it a fun exercise, but I also learned the word 'cur' and started a lifelong relationship with Shakespeare, who remains one of my favorite word-smiths," Singletary said. "Mrs. Matthews made me proud of being a big word nerd."

Matthews team-taught the speech component of Sandburg's freshman honors English class alongside her longtime colleague Jean Moran, who taught the literature piece. Moran said one former student, former U.S. Rep. Jim Nussle, an Iowa Republican, famously wore a paper bag over his head on the U.S. House floor to protest what he saw as mismanagement by the opposing party — an idea that Moran said may have been inspired by his time in Matthews' English class.

"One of the things he remembered from Mar-

anne's speech class was that you needed to get the attention of your audience before you did anything else," Moran said.

Matthews brought out the best in students working on a school play, said Julie Meyerson Ross, who graduated from Sandburg in 1976.

"In high school I was an insecure, fair-to-middling being. I got into theater and under the guidance of Mrs. Matthews I became special, talented and valued," Ross said. "She was fun, creative and attentive to all us teenagers. She respected and inspired us."

Ross recalled that before a production, Matthews would send handwritten cards to every member of a production's cast and crew, "lauding the unique accomplishments and gifts the student brought to the production."

School of the Art Institute of Chicago science professor Dianne Jedlicka worked on lighting and sound for student productions, and picked up on

Matthews' advice to performers on communications.

"I never thought I would act but here I am now, a college professor, teaching students all about life processes (and) I have fun passing this knowledge on because of how (she) coached us on presentation and making each sentence, gesture and silence count as a form of communication," Jedlicka said. "One of my favorite college classes to teach is animal behavior and I employ many of (her) techniques in my delivery of the science."

Despite Matthews' high profile at Sandburg as a theater director, she was disinclined to accept recognition for her work, said Thompson Brandt, a former student who later became a colleague as an orchestra director for Sandburg productions.

"This is a rare character trait for stage directors, not often shared by others in the craft," Brandt said.

"Marianne was among the finest faculty members that Carl Sandburg High

School produced."

Moran recalled Matthews' practical nature and generosity when it came to making productions happen.

"Marianne brought in her wedding dress when we needed one for a costume, and she brought in her dining room furniture for 'The Miracle Worker,'" Moran said. "Marianne never lost sight of the fact that she was working with students, and that their experience and learning topped everything. She did not hesitate to cast against type or to give extra time to a student when it was needed."

After retiring from Sandburg in 2001, Matthews volunteered at the Hinsdale Public Library, and also enjoyed theater outings, her niece said.

Matthews is survived by her husband, Jim.

A memorial Mass will be held at 10 a.m. Friday at St. Cletus Catholic Church, 600 W. 55th St., La Grange.

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The Daily Southtown is published by Tribune Publishing. Direct all inquiries to Tribune Publishing, 560 W.

Grand Ave., Chicago, IL, 60654.

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