The Leaflet

Fall 2025



The Elm Middle School Cougars celebrate their 3-Peat Championship win in the Leyden-Norwood Athletic Conference.

401 ELMWOOD PARK
COMMUNITY UNIT SCHOOL DISTRICT

Cougars Celebrate Three-Peat Championship Win



As Elm Middle School's fall sports season continues, we want to salute the girls softball team for an incredible three-peat! The Cougars captured their third consecutive Leyden-Norwood Athletic Conference championship with a 7-2 win over Mannheim on September 24 at Rosemont Stadium. Sixth grader Mia LaRocco hit a grand slam in the first inning, and eighth grader Delilah Rodriguez delivered a dominant pitching performance to secure the win.

The team finished the season 11-1 overall and 10-1 in conference play, going 31-2 against LNAC opponents over the past three seasons under head coach Sue Dutton and assistant coach Kathy Demas. Standout performances included LaRocco (.714 batting average), 7th grader KimBella Posada (.687), and Madelyn "Mad Dog" Braglia with 12 stolen bases. Delilah Rodriguez, the team's MVP, went 10-1 with 75 strikeouts and only 16 walks.

Coach Dutton said, "I think we were able to do a three-peat because of the desire for the kids to win. They bought into everything I tried to teach them."

Congrats to all the Cougars on an amazing season!

Five EPHS Students Earn ILMEA District 1 Honors Ensembles



Five Elmwood Park High School students were recently selected to perform in the Illinois Music Education Association (ILMEA) District 1 Honors Ensembles, a prestigious program that recognizes exceptional musical talent and dedication.

To qualify, students submitted audition videos performing challenging musical selections and were chosen through ILMEA's highly competitive review process. This year's honorees were:

- Karolina Wojdyla, Senior Band — Flute
- Amanda Camacho, Senior Chorus — Soprano I
- Kelly Dietrich, Senior Chorus — Alto II
- Terea Hargrove, Senior Chorus — Alto II
- Kimberly Herrera, Senior Chorus — Alto I

This was the first time all five students earned District 1 honors, marking an exciting milestone in their musical journeys. For these students, music has long been a source of connection and self-expression. Kimberly Herrera, a Swing Choir member, clarinetist, and Marching Tigers drum major, said, "I love how we can express our emotions and go with the feeling of the music." These talented musicians showcase the best of EPHS's fine arts community through their hard work and artistry.

Elmwood Elementary Walk-A-Thon Raises Over $10,000

Elmwood Elementary's annual Walk-A-Thon was a huge success, raising over $10,000 to support school programs and activities. As the PATT's largest fundraiser, the event helps fund assemblies, classroom celebrations, extra supplies, and student and parent events—adding the "extras" that make Elmwood such a special place.

With beautiful weather, matching shirts, and plenty of smiles, students from Kindergarten through 5th grade walked the route from Belden to Bloomingdale Streets. Volunteers cheered along the way, creating an atmosphere full of energy and school spirit. From dance parties and bubbles to silly string and superhero appearances, the Walk-A-Thon had something for everyone. This event will go down in the books as another unforgettable celebration of Elmwood pride.



John Mills 4th Grader Named a National Math Star



We're proud to announce that Michael Swiderski, a 4th grader at John Mills, has been selected for the National Math Stars 2025 cohort—a multi-state program that supports exceptional math students through high school. In 2025, the Midwest region had 1,700 applicants. Of those, 150 became finalists, and 45 were selected as Stars, including eleven from Illinois.

Michael was nominated by Amy Fishman, John Mills' enrichment teacher, whose dedication helped him shine. Ms. Fishman said, "We are incredibly proud of Michael for this achievement. It's a remarkable opportunity that will help him thrive academically and open doors in STEM for years to come." As part of the program, Michael will receive weekly math mentoring, advanced learning opportunities, STEM enrichment, and invitations to competitions and camps—all at no cost to his family. Congratulations to Michael for his hard work!

Important Upcoming Dates

December 22-January 2: Winter Break
March 23-27: Spring Break
May 29: Last Day of School

All Schools Commendable!

We're proud to share that all four District 401 schools received a COMMENDABLE summative designation from the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE). This designation indicates that all of our student groups performed adequately across the district. In addition, our high school's 4-year graduation rate reached 91%.

EPHS Alumni Inspire Students at College & Career Fair



Pictured: Dr. Elliott Perez (2013), Domenic Cappelluti (2019), Kyle Wassom (2018), Jim Kozyra (2002), Basia Wilczek (2011), Vince Virgilio (2011), Kevin Clark (2011)

The College and Career Fair made a big impact at EPHS this year! With 20 colleges, 10 Triton programs, and 16 career speakers, students had the chance to explore a wide range of future opportunities.

A highlight of the day was the 7 former EPHS students who returned to share their career journeys. Alumni provided firsthand insight, showing students what it took to reach their professional goals. With careers ranging from biomedical research to finance management, their return showcased pride in the community and offered a unique connection for current students.

Students received "passports" to collect stickers from speakers and college representatives, giving them a fun, interactive way to engage and ask questions. Overall, the College & Career Fair offered students inspiration, guidance, and a chance to meet connections in their fields of interest—especially from those who once walked the same halls.

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Stories Around 401

We have the privilege of telling the many stories of our staff and students at District 401. Scan the QR code to view our website, latest news, all social channels, and more!

Source
Krista Kerber, Writer & Designer
Dave Porreca, Photographer

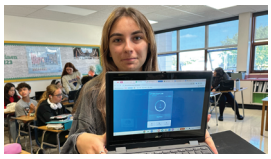
401 Recognized by INSPRA



401 has been recognized for an Award of Excellence by the Illinois Chapter of the National School Public Relations Association (INSPRA)! The award was given to our "We Are 401" video series, created by our District Communications & Social Media Specialist, Dave Porreca. The series shares unique stories about the people of our community—like EPHS students who attend Polish school outside of their regular school day.

This specific video shows how these students celebrate and preserve their Polish culture, language, and heritage—strengthening their connections to family, history, and community. They support each other in the program while deepening their understanding of traditions and identity. This story reflects the welcoming, diverse spirit of Elmwood Park and the pride our students carry in who they are and where they come from. Thanks to the "We Are 401" series for highlighting such amazing parts of our community!

SmartPass Digital Hallway System



EPHS introduced a new digital hall pass system called SmartPass. It helps manage student time in the halls, letting all staff be aware of students' locations. Keeping logistics organized, over 3,000 schools nationwide currently use the system.

John Mills McTeacher Night



The John Mills community came together for their annual McTeacher's Night, helping raise $1,429 for Misericordia Heart of Mercy Chicago. Many thanks to everyone who attended to support this amazing cause!

Why Character Matters Presentation



MLB agent Mark Leinweaver, who represents more than 75 professional players, visited EPHS during Homecoming week to speak on "Why Character Matters." He shared lessons on leadership, grit, and accountability with students.

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