



Coverage of high school softball, baseball, water polo, soccer and more  
**Sports, Section 2**



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# THE REGIONAL NEWS

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Photo by Anthony Caciopo

Stone monument marking Incarnation Parish on West 127th Street in Palos Heights.

## Parents: Incarnation Monsignor berated kids, teachers at Mass

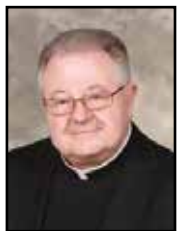
'Lousy Catholics' he reportedly said

By Dermot Connolly  
Staff Writer

Incarnation School in Palos Heights will be closing permanently in June, and parents of many of the students feel that hurtful remarks made by Monsignor R. George Sarauskas during his homily at a school Mass last Thursday effectively "kicked them when they were down."

"He told the students they were lousy Catholics," said Andrea Covert, who was at the Mass, as

was her son, a seventh-grader at the school at 5705 W. 127th St. in Palos Heights. "Students in fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth grade attend that Mass every week, and I usually do too," she explained. Covert said she never before had a problem with Sarauskas, who lives in the parish rectory, and regularly says Mass at the church. So, she was shocked when he began "calling out students and teachers" for not attending Mass



Monsignor Sarauskas

on Sunday regularly.

"He bullied the students and the teachers. He actually called people out from the pulpit, and had them stand up," said Covert. "He even said, 'It is a good thing this school is closing, because you are not learning how to be good Catholics here anyway.'"

A call to Monsignor Sarauskas for comment was not returned in time for The Regional's deadline.

"We're not perfect Catholics, no one is. But that is why Jesus died for our sins. But we are loving Catholics," said Covert.

"This is happening after we've grieved and tried to move on. Everyone has picked new schools.

But now, because it is the last few weeks, it is getting sad again, and I feel like he beat us up while we were already down. You go to Mass to get strength and be renewed, not to be bullied," she added.

"This eighth-grade class will be our last, and they are just the most awesome group of young men and women. And he told them they weren't going to be successful," said Covert.

"These children were being bullied. I am an adult and have had my ups and downs but they were just shell-shocked. It was like leaving a war zone to see

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### PALOS TOWNSHIP

## Brannigan gets support at meeting

"They're the haters,' supporters say of protestors

By Anthony Caciopo  
Regional News Editor

There was a new development at the Palos Township Board of Trustees meeting Monday—the presence of supporters of Trustee Sharon Brannigan.

The Township's monthly meetings since July 2017 have been noteworthy for the large number of people, frequently exceeding 100, who have protested Brannigan for remarks she posted on social media that many consider offensive to Muslims and Middle Eastern people in general.

Middle Easterners and non-Middle Easterners alike have been attending the meetings to express their rejection of her now-deleted remarks and to demand her resignation.

But Monday evening, a twist in the recent proceedings at the meetings took place when about a dozen people attended in support of the embattled trustee. And the differences of opinion were frequently heated.

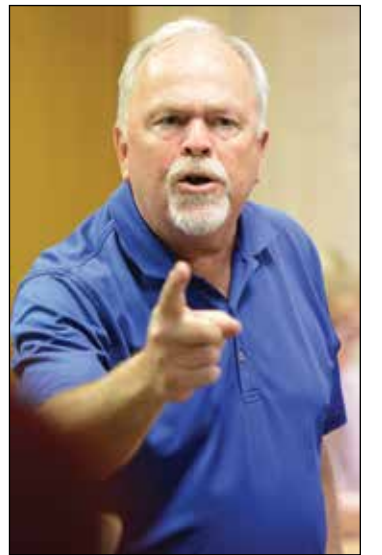


Photo by Anthony Caciopo

Turning to the crowd of protestors at Monday's Palos Township meeting following the Pledge of Allegiance, an unidentified man shouts, "You wonder why nobody wants to respect you? The crowd had taken part in the entire Pledge, raising their voices at the end..." with liberty and justice FOR ALL."

Even the Pledge of Allegiance was a cause for contention.

"You wonder why nobody wants to respect you," shouted a man who stood up from his seat

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## Son pays homage to Judy Baar Topinka in his new book

By Steve Metsch

The son of the late Judy Baar Topinka is hoping a book he's written about his mother can teach valuable lessons to our youths.

Joseph Baar Topinka, 50, who now lives in Texas and teaches employment law at Texas State University, has written "Just Judy," an entertaining and interesting 96-page book about his mom, one of Illinois' most beloved politicians. He presented a brief videotape about his mother's life, and then chatted with people at a book signing May 12 at the Riverside Public Library.

Judy Baar Topinka lived much of her life in Riverside and it was there that she began her career in politics. She certainly had a loyal following, losing only one election. "Somebody had to tell the story. And what better person than her

son?" he said. "Her life has a lot of great lessons we can all learn from, especially young people."

The colorful book is designed to act as a study guide for middle-school students, he said, but at the book signing, all the people there were adults.

James Connelly, of Chicago, said Judy was popular because "she never forgot her roots and what people were about."

"Wouldn't you say we need a little bit more Judy? She was the most popular Republican in the state. Even Democrats liked her," Connelly said.

Judy Baar Topinka was all about four core issues, her son said: "Good government, civility, ethics and love of heritage, which is one reason I'm wearing this," he said.

He wore a bright red Czech Republic hockey jersey bearing the name of legendary NHL star Jaromir Jagr. His mother was proud of her Bohemian and Czech roots, he said.

"This book is about her life and really about how she loved

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## Palos Park mom with ALS 'lives in the moment'

By Anthony Caciopo  
Regional News Editor

Wisdom, it has been said, often comes from the mouths of babes.

Kristin Rankin, raising three young daughters with her husband, Kevin Kribs, should know.

Rankin, 40, has ALS, a disease of the central nervous system. It has affected her speech, her mobility and the dexterity in her hands, among other things.

There's no known cure. So what did her seven-year-old daughter, Paige, challenge her mother to do for fun recently?

Why, an emoji-drawing contest! "They're all about emojis," Rankin said with a smile about her daughters.

Emojis are small, digital images or icons used to express emotions, an idea, etc.

Think of a happy face, a thumbs-up, or a heart, especially when sent in a text message or an email, and you've got an emoji.

Rankin took her best shot in the emoji-drawing contest with Paige despite the diminished dexterity in her hands and the results were judged by Paige's older sister, Tess.

Tess declared Paige the winner.

But Paige didn't want to let her mom down.

"Pretty good for ALS!" she wrote on her mom's drawing, a comment that made Rankin smile.

"She was encouraging me, saying 'wow, I think you did great,'" said Rankin.

ALS (Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis), sometimes referred to as Lou Gehrig's Disease, is a rapidly progressive, neurodegenerative terminal disease that causes muscle weakness, difficulty speaking and swallowing and, generally, complete paralysis, according to the Les Turner ALS Foundation, headquartered in north suburban Skokie.

The foundation is named for a late Chicago-area businessman, father and husband, diagnosed with ALS in 1976, who was "frustrated by the lack of local resources available to manage the devastating effects of his diagnosis," as detailed on the foundation's website.

"His family and friends supported his desire to provide support to others affected by the disease with the resources and hope for a cure unavailable to him. In doing so, they inspired his legacy."

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Photo by Anthony Caciopo

Kristin Rankin cuddles with her daughter, Laney, 4, at the family home in Palos Park. Rankin has ALS and is raising three girls with her husband, Kevin Kribs.



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