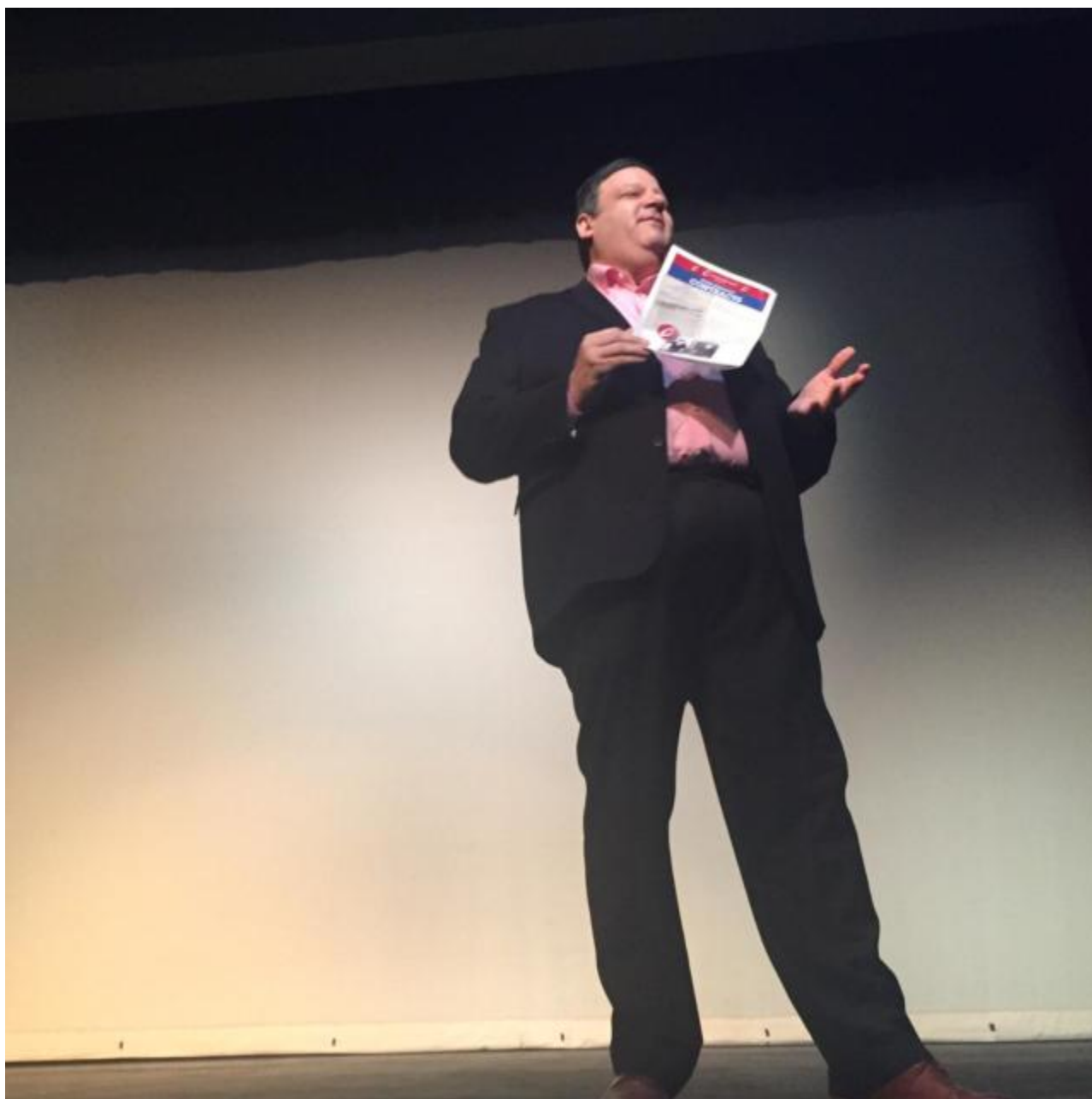


Man shares original Jackie Robinson pro baseball contract with students, people across America

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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EDWARDSVILLE - **Edwardsville High School** students and **Collinsville** residents at City Hall were able to experience a key component of American sports history – the original signed professional baseball contract of **Jackie Robinson** thanks to collector **Mykalai Kontilai** this past **Friday**.

Robinson, who became the first African-American to play professional baseball by breaking the color barrier on Oct. 23, 1945, when Robinson signed his Minor League Contract with the Montreal Royals. Eighteen months later, he completed “The Great Experiment” when he signed a contract to play in the Major Leagues with the Brooklyn Dodgers on April 11, 1947.

These iconic contracts serve as the initial cornerstone of an entirely new concept in collectibles. **The Collectors Café**, which debuted with its soft launch on April 11, 2016, as the first integrated social network (Collectorbook) and auction house backed by authenticity insurance to serve the entire collectibles industry, becoming the platform to serve as the first global lifestyle brand for collectors and collectibles.

Mykalai Kontilai, founder & CEO of Collectors Café, made the presentation at both venues. He was quite taken by his experience at Edwardsville High School.

“I have traveled around the country with my background in educational media, and I have never been more impressed by a high school in America than Edwardsville High School,” he said after the presentation. “Edwardsville High School is a model high school for others in America. It is a positive prototype not only from a resources perspective, but Principal **Dennis Cramsey** does an amazing job with positive teamwork with the administration. The EHS students are very bright kids.”

The message Kontilai tried to convey to the students was because of sacrifices of people like the great Jackie Robinson, **Martin Luther King Jr.**, **Abraham Lincoln** and all the other great Americans, everyone is afforded the opportunities they have today.

“They can become successful in anything they want,” he said. “The greatest message I tried to leave was they can make a difference by espousing the principles and character of Jackie.”

“I also want to thank Mayor **John Miller**, City Manager **Mitchell Bair**, and my dear friends, **Kevin and Debbie Weinacht**, who worked tirelessly through their advocacy and continuing efforts to make this event in Collinsville possible.” It’s cities like Collinsville that make up the true fabric of America.” Kontilai said.

Kontilai was bestowed with Collinsville's highest honor by Mayor John Miller when he receives the Key to the City. "The City of Collinsville is honored and humbled to be able to host these historical civil rights documents for our residents to view," said Mayor Miller.

Kontilai said he acquired the contract in 2013 from a private collector in New York, who was once a Brooklyn historian.

Many of the EHS students stayed afterward for conversation and photos with Kontilai. He said the students, administration and faculty made him feel quite at home in Edwardsville.

One young man came up to him and said his name was Jackie and also his grandfather was the same name. Kontilial said he didn't ask the boy if he was named after Jackie Robinson, but if so, that was quite an honor for him to carry in his life.

"This is really one of the greatest discoveries in American history," Kontilai said of discovering and purchasing the Robinson original professional baseball contract. "It is an honor to have taken it throughout America. These two seminal documents that changed the course of American history and reinforced our American ideals of Freedom and Justice for all Americans."