



Helping hands: Larkshire Elementary third graders (clockwise from left) Alycia Rammage, Lita L'Esperance and Kevin Tudball pack boxes for hurricane victims with teacher Jeanette Swartz.

Area folks reach out for hurricane victims

BY CASEY HANS
STAFF WRITER

People in the Farmington area are reaching out to help people who were hard hit by Hurricane Andrew.

Residents, school children and others are collecting box after box of needed items to be taken to the storm-ravaged areas of Southern Florida and Louisiana.

"It's going very well — donations really escalated at the end of this week," Capt. Homer Smith of the Farmington Salvation Army said Thursday.

He said students at William Grace Elementary are conducting a two-week drive, and students at North Farmington High School also did their part to collect needed items.

Smith stressed there is no need for clothing for the victims, and that the Salvation Army has become overloaded with clothing that will not be taken South.

The Salvation Army put out their famous red kettles in the area Wednesday to collect, as they do during the holiday months. At the beginning of last week, they had already collected \$2,000 in donations from the community, he said.

Over at North Farmington students wrapped up a three-day drive Thursday, spearheaded by health teacher Greg Grodzicki and business teacher Lloyd Wep-

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Jeanette Swartz
Larkshire teacher

man. "We've got the back of a pickup truck (filled) for sure," Grodzicki said. He said the storm drew a special sympathy from students, who were "kind of proud we could do this thing."

Several students told Grodzicki they had relatives in the storm's path, including some who had lost their homes.

Over at Larkshire Elementary, Jeanette Swartz' third graders also were packing items collected by the entire Larkshire community, and they also penning letters to cheer victims.

Their effort was part of a drive by Ryder's Automotive Carrier Division in Troy, where Swartz' husband works.

Ryder is based in Miami, and Larkshire's efforts are specifically directed to Ryder families there.

The Swartz' live in Farmington Hills.

"There were families they couldn't even find," Swartz said. "I felt these families were just left alone. Everyone here feels so much better if they can do something. They are really pitching in."

Swartz said she was receiving not only needed items like Visqueen rolls and paper goods but extra blankets and packages of new sheets.

People can still donate needed goods to help including bottled water, dry or canned foods, baby food, paper goods, toothpaste, toothbrushes, blankets and linens. Even items like kitty litter for pets and charcoal to help homeless families cook are welcome, Smith said.

Cash donations should be in the form of checks and made out to "Salvation Army Hurricane Relief."

The items may be taken to the Salvation Army, 27500 Shawwassee, just west of Inkster, to Farmington Hills City Hall or police station at 11 Mile and Orchard Lake, or to any of the city's four fire stations.

Smith said local items donated are being taken to a central point in Detroit where they are transported South. He said the first two semi-truck loads left Detroit on Friday, Aug. 28, bound for the troubled area.

Well owners want to keep out city water

BY JOANNE MALIJEWSKI
STAFF WRITER

Ruth Rycroft says there's another side to the latest request for water service in rural Biddestone Woods subdivision.

"We are happy with our wells. We don't want the subdivision dug up," said the president of Biddestone Woods Homeowners Association. But other residents — a minority led by Steve and Sandra Secrest — want water and have again petitioned the Farmington Hills City Council for a special assessment district that takes in only 10 lots. Twenty-eight homeowners live in the subdivision off Farmington Road, north of 11 Mile.

A public hearing scheduled for 7:30 p.m. Monday, Sept. 14, will include the entire subdivision rather than just the Secrests' requested district. Special assessment districts can be reduced but they can't be enlarged without petition.

"As you know, my wife and I have been actively but futilely trying to get city water for over a year," Secrest wrote the city council.

The city has allowed the Secrests the option of hooking up to an existing water main on Farmington Road. But that hook-up would serve only the Secrests and at great expense.

This latest move — the second official one before the city council — to bring water into the subdivision on Farmington Road annoys Ruth and Rob Rycroft as well as the majority of homeowners.

"The residents are happy with their wells," Ruth Rycroft said. "I don't want to drink city water. I don't want it to be fluorinated. I don't want it to be chlorinated."

But she'll tell you that if the Secrests and the city council want to put water in and have it accomplished on a payback system allowing residents to hook up when they want, that's fine. The majority of

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Ruth Rycroft

the association doesn't want to pay an assessment for water, Rycroft said.

The Secrests had argued that their water — and the water of some neighbors, such as Victor Cassar's, isn't any good. But Oakland County results say it's fine. Cassar, however, says it still isn't any good.

"Oakland County did a batch of tests. The results of that batch were quite suspect. It didn't make a whole lot of sense is what Oakland County said," said Tom Blaseff, Farmington Hills public services director.

Oakland County did more tests. "In a sanitary analysis of well water, the presence of nitrates is of special significance. If nitrates are found it indicates an index of groundwater pollution by sewage effluent. All nitrate sample results in this study were zero," according to the county health department.

At the Aug. 17 meeting where Secrest's latest petition was discussed, City Manager William Costick recommended in a report to the council that a public hearing should be delayed because of the lack of a health hazard and an existing moratorium issued by the state health department. While a 72-inch water main is supposed to be built through Franklin, the state doesn't want anymore hook-ups.

But the city council overrode Costick's recommendation. Rycroft said members of the association are becoming exasperated.

"There's no way there's a majority," Rycroft said. "They should have a substantial majority."

Rycroft admitted that she didn't appreciate councilwoman Joanne

Smith's Aug. 17 comments about well water. "She publicly stated she once had well water and dislikes it. She's putting a negative effect on every piece of property with well water. That's unjust."

Secrest admitted to the city council Aug. 17 that he didn't have a majority of property owners who want water. That's why he only took his petition to property owners near his house.

But Rycroft calls that gerrymandering. "I don't think they should subdivide our subdivision. Her husband, Rob, agreed. 'It's a bit like divide and conquer.'"

Rycroft and other neighbors think that once a petition dies, the issue should also die. They say it's unfair for a few homeowners to continue the fight by creating smaller districts within a subdivision where they will get what they want despite majority opposition. After quite a controversy last year, the Secrests and some nearby neighbors got sanitary sewer service.

"We feel there should be a waiting time between one petition and another," Rycroft said.

The association, Rycroft said, is trying to deny the Secrests and other nearby neighbors their opportunity for water. The majority of homeowners, however, believe that the Secrests should either pay for their lone hook-up to the Farmington Road water main or dig another well.

"Unfortunately, two contractors estimated the cost at about \$20,000, not including the costs of easements and landscaping," according to a letter Secrest wrote to Costick.

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ON THE AGENDA

Below are highlights from the agendas of meetings this week. All meetings are open to the public.

Farmington Area Naturalists
Spicer House
Heritage Park

Farmington Road, between 10 and 11 Mile
7:30 p.m., Tuesday, Sept. 8

The topic of discussion will be animal senses.

Farmington City Council

Council chambers
23600 Liberty
8 p.m., Tuesday, Sept. 8

The council will meet on Tuesday due to the Labor Day holiday. Call 477-5500 for information.

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