

CRANES
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district know about it.

In no time, Japanese parents and their kids crafted 1,000 paper cranes for Matthew. Inside each was a wish for Matthew's good health and getting his sight back.

The book, "Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes" points out that 1,000 paper cranes is the ultimate good luck charm for good health, said Beechview Principal Norma Jean Sass.

A mobile containing the 1,000 cranes, which hang in strands and are made of different colors and textures, now hangs in Matthew's bedroom.

"It was very touching and moving that these people went to so much trouble for someone they didn't even know," said Linda.

"Beechview is a loving and caring school and everybody there has been very supportive."

Linda and her husband, Nick, said they owe thanks to Matthew's eye doctor, Michael McGrath, owner of Farmington Vision Clinic, who discovered something might be wrong during Matthew's routine eye exam. He had Matthew take further tests, which revealed the tumor.

The tumor was benign, Linda said.

Matthew's middle school, East, where he is a seventh grader, is offering great support along with Oakland Intermediate Schools, said his



BAL BRISLER | OBSERVER

Matt inspects a string of origami cranes.

mom. He is learning Braille and keyboard techniques.

Matthew said it's tough remembering the different letters.

He is expected to go back to school part-time in the winter semester.

"He has a great attitude," Linda said. "He's getting a lot of support and help from our

church (First Presbyterian) and the community."

When the mobile was brought in as a surprise for Chris to give to his brother, school staff shed lots of tears, Sass said.

"It was a very special thing to do for a very special kid."

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Communities look for ways to use sewer fund just approved by voters

BY KURT KUBAN
STAFF WRITER

Many local communities are just beginning to examine how they can use a recently passed sewer bond.

Sixty percent of the state's voters approved Proposal 2, as the bond was known on the Nov. 5 ballot. Its passage gives the state the green light to borrow \$1 billion over 10 years and use the money to provide low-interest loans to communities around the state to pay for sewer and stormwater projects.

As much as 70 percent of the money may go to communities in the Detroit area, where the majority of the state's population lives. The region is also home to a large majority of the state's sewer infrastructure. And it is a crumbling infrastructure.

During the next 30 years, communities in Metro Detroit will need as much as \$26 billion just to fix and maintain the existing sewer system, the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments estimates. That doesn't even include the cost of fixing stormwater infrastructure.

Federal aid has been curtailed in recent years, which has left many communities wondering how they are going to pay for expensive projects, said Chuck Hersey, an environmental expert for SEMCOG. He believes the bond, which will be added to the state's revolving fund, will jumpstart some of the projects.

"This isn't going to solve the

whole problem, but it is going to help," he said.

Communities would have to apply for the loans through the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, which will have a priority ranking system based on the scope of the project. Most of the projects will deal with repairing sanitary sewer systems, but at least 10 percent of the money will be available for stormwater projects and improvements to private property, such as fixing or monitoring septic systems.

"There's any number of ways a community can use this program. There's going to be no shortage of applicants," Hersey said.

Oakland County Drain Commissioner John McCulloch would like to use the program to help pay for the planned Evergreen/Farmington combined sewer overflow basin, which will contain sewage overflows into the Rouge River during rain events. When it is completed, the basin will serve 15 communities, including Birmingham, Southfield and Farmington Hills.

Initial cost estimates to construct a new basin are in the neighborhood of \$180 million, though McCulloch has developed an alternative plan to use existing infrastructure that will cost \$22 million. He is hoping to get approval from the DEQ to implement the less-expensive plan.

Even if he does get the

approval, he said the 15 communities will still be responsible to pay for much of the project.

"The thing we have to remember about this bond is that it is a loan program. Communities still have to find a way to pay back the loans," McCulloch said. "The real savings to the residents is that they are paying low interest or no interest over a long period of time."

SEMCOG's Hersey said many communities still don't know how to take advantage of the loan program, so his organization will hold meetings to explain what kind of projects are eligible and how communities can apply. Applications for the first year of the program are due to the MDEQ by July.

Interest in the program will grow as federal clean water mandates begin kicking in, Hersey said. He believes residents want to clean up rivers, which is why they approved the bond issue in the first place.

"The passing of the bond shows people recognize the importance of clean water. It's a quality of life issue. People don't want to live or do business in areas where there is water pollution."

"We are on the path where we understand you can have urban areas and still have clean rivers and lakes. And we are starting to see signs of improvement. We just have to keep moving down that path."

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HHS PomPon to host clinic

Farmington Hills Harrison High School Varsity PomPon is hosting a PomPon clinic for middle school students on Saturday, Dec. 7 from 10:00 a.m.-2 p.m. at Harrison High School.

Cost for the clinic is \$25 per person. The clinic attendees will be performing at the Harrison JV Basketball game on Tuesday, Dec. 10. For information and registration, call (248) 477-1073.

Registration is due by Tuesday, Nov. 26.

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