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County school districts take part in metal-detector program

By Andrew Crowley | acrowley@reporter-times.com Jul 21, 2018 Updated Jul 21, 2018

MORGAN COUNTY — School safety is always a matter of concern and importance. This year I put a sharp focus on the issue nationally due to fatal school shootings in Parkland, Florida and Fe, Texas.

The issue hit close to home for Hoosiers following an incident at Noblesville West Middle School May 25, when two people were shot. Fortunately, nobody was killed. Earlier this month, Indiana Governor Eric Holcomb announced a program to provide metal detectors free of charge to public, charter and accredited non-public schools.

“Controlling what comes into our school buildings is just one important part of keeping our schools safe, and our efforts to assist school corporations must be ongoing and evolving,” Holcomb said in a July 9 press release. “Local officials are best positioned to determine their school safety needs and the measures that make sense for their students and communities, and — for many — these handheld metal detectors could make a substantial difference.”

Every school that signs up will receive one device per 250 students. The Indiana State Police and Department of Administration (IDOA) is responsible for coordinating the program. Schools had until July 19 to place their orders if they wanted them by the beginning of the school year. Those metal detectors will be delivered by the middle of next month, while orders placed after July 19 are expected to arrive later in the fall.

All the public school districts in Morgan County have chosen to take part in the program.

Dr. Randy Taylor, superintendent of the Mooresville Consolidate School Corporation (MCSC), has to say about the program.

“Our district has applied for the governor’s handheld metal-detector program,” he said in an email last week. “We’re currently developing policies and protocols for their use. These detectors will be a part of our overall school safety and security plan.”

Part of those plans included the addition of more security cameras and upgrades to radios used by MCSC staff members. That’s all made possible through a \$50,000 matching safety grant MCSC received from the Indiana Department of Homeland Security (DHS), which will entail \$100,000 in expenses that’s devoted to school security.

MCSC is partnering with Adult and Child Health to provide a behavioral health coach and clinic in addition to counselors already employed in the district.

The Metropolitan School District of Martinsville (MSD) will receive 17 handheld metal detectors as part of the program. According to a press release, the district is currently working on plans for the use and implementation of the metal detectors and will soon give a report to the MSD Board of School Trustees. Per the press release, the next step will be training MSD staff in their usage.

“We participated in this opportunity to receive metal detectors for our district to continuously improve our safety measures. My main priority is the safety of our students, teachers and administration. It is important for everyone to be and feel safe in the school environment,” MSD of Martinsville Superintendent Dr. Michele Moore said. “I would like to thank Gov. Holcomb for creating this opportunity for Indiana schools and taking school safety seriously.”

MSD also received the \$50,000 DHS grant and will incorporate the wands into its larger efforts to further bolster school security.

Like the MSD of Martinsville, the Monroe-Gregg School District and the Nineveh-Hensley-Jacks United School Corporation are also planning to implement the handheld metal detectors after training and research on the matter.

“Monroe-Gregg School District is planning on taking advantage of Gov. Holcomb’s program,” Monroe-Gregg Superintendent Dr. Kirk Freeman said. “We are in the process of ordering the metal detectors.”

detectors and researching information concerning the latest protocols, trainings, etc. concerning use of such devices.”

“We have ordered a handful of these handheld metal detector wands offered by our state for no charge,” NHJ Superintendent Dr. Timothy Edsell said. “However, we will not implement or use them until we have local policies, procedures, guidelines and training in place.”

And smaller school districts like Eminence also took advantage of the program.

“I have ordered the one we are eligible for. There isn’t a plan in place until we receive more guidance from the state,” Eminence Superintendent Laura Penman said.

Tabernacle Christian School and Mooresville Christian Academy were also asked for comment but had not responded as of press time.

For more information about the handheld metal detector program, visit in.gov/idoa/3134.htm.

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