

Meriden

School dentists to make their final rounds

By Andrew Perlot
Record-Journal staff

MERIDEN — The Board of Education discussed Tuesday how social workers were being used in its elementary schools to lead group sessions and informed members about the dental program that offers low-cost care to students.

Each elementary school has a social worker who meets with students going through personal difficulties, Board President Mark Hughes told the board. Some have started leading group sessions with students based around various themes, such as dealing with the death of family members.

The district's dental program has serviced 65 students at

Roger Sherman School and 30 at Thomas Hooker School so far this year. It will make a tour of the rest of the elementary schools before the year is out.

Students who are uninsured can have their teeth cleaned and damage repaired for a small co-pay. The work is done by employees of the nonprofit Community Health Center Inc.

In other news, board member Thomas E. Bruenn was also cleared by the city's Board of Ethics Monday night to vote on personnel contracts, despite his prior position as president of the Meriden Federation of Teachers.

Bruenn decided not to vote on personnel contract issues coming before the board until one year after he had left his

position as the president of the Meriden Federation of Teachers, the union which represents Meriden's teachers, in order to sidestep any appearance of an ethical violation.

That year is now up, and Bruenn went before the Board of Ethics to make sure that there would be no conflict of interest with further personnel contract votes.

Bruenn still receives a state-managed pension for his years as a teacher and Meriden's board has no say in it so there is no monetary conflict, Bruenn said. He said the Board of Ethics approved future contract votes by him.

"Next one, I'll probably vote on it," Bruenn said. If further conflicts arise, he will go before

the board once more for further rulings.

"It's better to get an opinion (before you vote)," he said.

Board of Ethics Chairman Joseph Galotti could not be reached for comment Tuesday night.

Board of Education member Frank J. Kogut, who previously voiced concern over a possible conflict of interest, said he was perfectly satisfied that Bruenn had done everything by the book, and didn't mind him voting on contracts.

"I commend him," he said.

The board also saw a presentation by Roberto Soto, assistant principal of Washington Middle School, about the school's first celebration of the Month of the Young Adolescent

in November.

Students took part in wood-working, pottery, mural painting, and genealogy workshops over the course of the month with a focus on unity.

The mural, called a Mural of Unity, was displayed to the board and will eventually be put in Washington's media center. It features people of different ethnicities getting together.

Seventh-grader Rebecca Hall told the board that she loved working on the mural and working with different students.

"We were brought together," she said, "even though we were from different walks of life."

aperlot@record-journal.com
(203) 317-2234