

## **Detroit schools secures \$2.4 million for water contamination solution**

Annalise Frank

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Annalise Frank/Crain's Detroit Business

A water cooler is pictured Sept. 5 during a tour of Golightly Education Center in Detroit Public Schools Community District. The district plans to pipe in new water in a plan announced about a month and a half after it shut off drinking water.

Detroit Public Schools Community District has so far secured \$2.4 million to deal with a widespread lead/copper water contamination problem in its buildings, including separate \$500,000 pledges from United Way for Southeastern Michigan and Quicken Loans Community Fund.

The nonprofit has also established the United Way Water Relief Fund to help pay for new drinking and filtration systems for the district's 106 schools. The total cost of the solution effort will be \$3,057,008, including a 10 percent contingency for unforeseen circumstances, according to the district's board meeting [agenda](#).



The Detroit public school district plans to buy 818 clean water stations for its 106 schools as part of a \$3 million effort to deal with high copper and/or lead levels in school buildings' water.

DPSCD, United Way and the Quicken Loans Community Fund announced the "permanent solution" Tuesday afternoon, soon after the Detroit school board [unanimously approved](#) the new plan.

The announcement comes about a month and a half after Superintendent Nikolai Vitti [shut off](#) all schools' drinking water due to metals contamination. So far [57 schools](#) have shown elevated levels of copper and/or lead, out of 86 for which test results have returned.

The district's plan involves installing new Elkay "hydration station" drinking fountains and filtration systems that cool water and remove contaminants.

DPSCD plans to buy 818 hydration stations and related filters and equipment for \$741,939 from Detroit-based Advance Plumbing and Heating Supply Co. The Elkay system filters out contaminants as regulated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, which sets recommended limits for contaminants in water, according to the district.

The new drinking fountains would replace existing water fountains, and be installed by GDI Integrated Facilities Management and RNA Facility Management. ATC Group will conduct environmental testing and abatement.

"For more than a century, the core of our work has focused on ensuring the communities' basic needs are met and access to clean drinking water is one such basic need," Darienne Driver, president and CEO of United Way for Southeastern Michigan, said in an emailed statement. "DPSCD is a valued United Way partner as we are

both committed to the well-being of students. We stand firmly with the District in putting the safety of our children first and ask the community's support of our special campaign so that students have access to clean drinking water."

#### Water station donors

The following are donating toward a \$3 million effort to install clean drinking water stations in 106 Detroit schools:

- United Way for Southeastern Michigan, \$500,000
- Quicken Loans Community Fund, \$500,000
- Delta Dental Foundation, \$300,000
- DTE Energy Foundation, \$300,000
- General Motors Co., \$200,000
- Ford Motor Company Fund, \$200,000
- FCA Foundation, \$100,000
- Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan/Blue Care Network, \$100,000
- Ascension Michigan, \$50,000
- Detroit Medical Center, \$50,000
- Health Alliance Plan/Henry Ford Health System, \$50,000
- The Jewish Fund, \$25,000
- and \$10,000 from an anonymous donor

Source: Detroit Public Schools Community District

United Way is seeking donations to its Detroit schools water fund on a new website, [UnitedWayWaterFund.org](http://UnitedWayWaterFund.org). In addition to its \$500,000 donation, the nonprofit said it will match individual donations up to \$500,000 total, meaning it could contribute up to \$1 million.

Donations are funding a substantial portion of costs, but the rest will come from the district's coffers.

"Clean water is a fundamental human right and if anything interferes with that right, then we believe it is the entire community's responsibility to immediately address it, especially when it comes to our children," said Detroit billionaire Dan Gilbert, founder and chairman of the Quicken Loans Community Fund. "We are proud to stand alongside the district and other generous donors who have come together to support Dr. Vitti, who is leading the charge to immediately and decisively fix this serious issue."

Since Vitti shut off drinking water access, the more than 50,000 students and staff have been drinking out of coolers and bottles. Students and staff can still wash their hands and flush toilets with water from the tap. They'll continue drinking out of coolers and bottles through the school year. DPSCD is to purchase water coolers through June 30 from Absopure for \$750,000.

Installation of the new water stations is expected to finish on or before July 31.

The district is still waiting for water test results from 17 schools. One school that's been reported so far had more than 54 times the federally acceptable limit for lead and another had 30 times the copper limit, *The Detroit News* [reported](#).