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Hood students fold 1,000 paper cranes to help Japan

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DERRY — A simple folded bird can do a world of good.

For Gilbert H. Hood Middle School students, the birds are set to fly to help victims of the earthquake and tsunami in Japan in March.

More than 1,000 origami cranes were folded by Hood students, all part of the "Wish Upon a Crane" effort to help Japan.

The project is spearheaded locally by former Hood student Dylan Mahalingam, now a Pinkerton Academy sophomore. Dylan hosted a recent crane-folding event in Nashua. His former middle school decided to follow his lead.

Dylan is a founder of Lil' MDGs, a youth-founded, youth-led group created to help support the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals.

At Hood, students were led in the crane-folding exercise by school guidance staffer Tricia DiGirolamo. She said it took about 20 minutes to fold the very first crane, but students got the hang of it really quickly.

"Most kids can do them in under 10 minutes," DiGirolamo said.

She filmed a folding instructional video on the school's television system.

The Bezos Family Foundation pledged \$2 for Japanese relief efforts for every crane made, up to a maximum of \$200,000. Money will help rebuild a damaged Japanese school.

Cranes will be crafted into a permanent art exhibit to be displayed at the school, through the Students Rebuild organization, coordinating the nationwide crane effort.

In addition to Hood's crane contribution, Dylan has placed boxes at Pinkerton to collect completed cranes. All the paper birds will be sent off soon.

DiGirolamo said if students folded 1,000 cranes, they were told they would get a wish.

"Our wish," she said, "is that Japan can recover."

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