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Committee adopts child ID program

By **MIKE GAFFNEY**
News correspondent

MARBLEHEAD — The School Committee has voted unanimously to start a Child Identification Program (CHIP) for kindergarten to fourth-grade students starting next fall.

Marblehead parents now have the option of letting their children participate in the program, which is designed to provide parents with useful information to more easily recover and identify kids who turn up missing.

David Riordan, of the Philan-

thropic Lodge AF & AM that is co-sponsoring the program with the Marblehead Harbor Rotary Club, told the School Committee that CHIP consists of three separate steps to help make this goal become possible.

- A brief videotaped interview of the child that can be distributed to the media to reach a large audience.
- Fingerprints of the child.
- Tooth print bite impressions that give accurate and important information for identification purposes.

Riordan said kids participating in CHIP only have to come in for a

few minutes one afternoon to get these things done. Once the identification procedures are completed, the information is put together in a packet and given to parents for safekeeping should their children ever be missing.

Riordan said he hoped parents would take the necessary steps to get their children involved in the program.

"No one is forced to participate in the program. It's totally up to the parents," Riordan said. "We're offering a voluntary service that we think is for the good of the community."

Riordan said members of both the Marblehead Harbor Rotary Club and the Philanthropic Lodge AF & AM would be volunteering their time to help get the program off the ground and running.

Riordan also said he had spoken to Police Chief James Carney, who solidly supports the program. More than 100,000 kids in Massachusetts have participated in CHIP, which is sponsored statewide by the Grand Lodge of Masons in Massachusetts, the Massachusetts Dental Society, the Massachusetts Crime Prevention Officers Association, and the Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Masons