



Carolers from the Bay Area Friends of the Fine Arts.

## FOR FUN AT TRAIN DISPLAY

sound a whistle on a long black train that traveled on a trestle over a river and past little hand-made trees and bushes.

Kaiden was one of 160 people who attended the second of nine open houses at the West Island Model Railroad Club center. The open houses continue Sunday, then Dec. 1-3 and Dec. 8-10.

Kaiden lives in Juneau, Alaska, which is accessible only by boat or plane.

"So he's a kid who loves

trains but doesn't get to see them," said his mother, Karen Trigg, 41, who is originally from Long Island and is visiting her parents with her family.

Thomas Farmer, 11, has almost the opposite luck. When he was younger, he and his family lived in a Mineola apartment next to the Long Island Rail Road tracks. Today, Thomas loves traveling across the Island to watch trains with his grandfather, parents or "anyone who can take me."

And he knows his stuff.

"I like it when the DM30AC hooks up to the MP15AC," he said, casually dropping names of locomotives that have been used by the LIRR.

Thomas was taking dozens of photos and videos of the trains on Saturday, in part to prepare for when his parents buy a new house and he has more space.

"When I get a new house I want to get my own railroad, so I'm getting ideas," he said.

## Pipe-leak study is inconclusive

BY EMILY C. DOOLEY

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A Virginia Tech expert hired by the Plainview Water District to examine pinhole water-pipe leaks in customers' homes has completed his investigation and said while the cause is unclear, changing water chemistry could be a solution.

The district hired Marc A. Edwards and his team earlier this year to help figure out what was causing leaks in the homes of about 15 percent of its customers, causing thousands of dollars in damage.

The researchers, whose contract was capped at \$7,500, analyzed water chemistry, pipe thickness and pits in the affected piping.

"Even though the cause of pitting is unclear at this time, it is possible that a change in corrosion control might reduce the frequency of pitting," wrote Edwards, who most recently helped uncover high lead conditions in drinking-water pipes in Flint, Michigan.

While Edwards investigated, the district began boosting alkalinity levels and as of this month, the treatment is on all wells, said Marc Laykind, one of three commissioners of the district's elected board.

Higher alkalinity levels help reduce corrosive acids and the hope is that this will halt future leaks.

"We really feel confident this is going to slow things down," Laykind said.

The district has also begun surveying plumbers and asking for their reports and experiences as a way to measure if the treatment is working.

There is no one state or county entity that tracks pinhole leaks, making it hard to quantify the problem.

And no one culprit has emerged. Bad piping, stray electrical current and high water pressure have also been

considered.

"What everyone has to understand is there's a lot of things that are contributing to it and they may not even be able to put their finger on [the cause]," said Stan Carey, who is chair of the Long Island Water Conference and Massapequa Water District superintendent.

The conference, a coalition of more than 50 suppliers and industry professionals, is not looking at the problem overall but some members are investigating, Carey said.

The Nassau County health department has received a few calls of pinhole leaks but the agency is not studying the issue, said spokeswoman Mary Ellen Laurain.

The same can be said in Suffolk County, where Department of Health Services spokeswoman Grace Kelly-McGovern said most water suppliers provide corrosion control treatment.

Bethpage Water District, which borders Plainview, has had a handful of pinhole leaks reported, Superintendent Mike Boufis said.

When the district started chlorinating the water in 2010, they also had reports. Stray electric current outside the homes has also caused issues.

"It's across the country," he said. "It's everywhere. It's not just Long Island."

Jack Auld has had pinhole leaks in his Lake Ronkonkoma home for the past five years, as have some of his neighbors.

"I have well water and it's doing the same thing," Auld said.

His plumber believes a bad supply of copper pipes at the time his house was built could be the cause.

He's had a number of leaks in the basement, causing him to rip out ceilings. "I hate to close it up because I'll have to open it up again," he said. "It's a real nightmare problem."



Expert says cause of pinhole leaks in home pipes remains unclear.

BARRY SLOAN