



JOSH MANDEL

STATE TREASURER OF OHIO

Crescent News
By Lisa Nicely

Several area entities are giving a golden STAR to a relatively new investment program through the state.

The STAR Plus program has surpassed \$1 billion in local government investments, according to the Ohio treasurer's office.

"We're pleasantly surprised at the rate in which the program has grown," said Ohio Treasurer Josh Mandel. "We had a feeling that it would be a popular service for taxpayers and local government. We did not expect it to grow as quickly as it has grown."

Funds in the STAR Plus program are fully FDIC insured and have no exposure to credit or market risks. The program has no term commitments either. The program utilizes 30 Ohio community banks that have been screened. The minimum required to open an account is \$500,000. The maximum is \$15 million.

More than 300 local government entities are taking part in the program, including several locally.

Five northwest Ohio entities are investing money with the program. Those entities and how much they invested include: Ayersville Local Schools, \$500,000; Four County Career Center, \$5,635,000; Napoleon Area Schools, \$9,823,257.67; city of Bryan, \$8,000,000; and Bryan City Schools, \$3,208,348.30.

"I have nothing but favorable comments about it," said Laura Rode, clerk/ treasurer of the city of Bryan. "Each year as a city treasurer (I am) required to take certified public investment management courses put on by the state of Ohio. Last year, in 2012, Josh Mandel's office was putting on the program. It seemed like a more optimal plan to go through and a higher yield than we're getting from other banks. It's been pretty well laid out and has been seamless for us. "

Rode said that about a third of the city's cash revenue is in the STAR Plus program.

"We could sink more into it at some future point," she said. "I may increase that by the end of the year. I'm impressed they rolled out this program."



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Connie Nicely, treasurer for Ayersville Local Schools, said that school districts are limited, by law, on where they can invest funds.

"It (STAR Plus) was one avenue where we could invest funds that is a safe investment, and the rate is competitive," she said. "We put some money in it to see how it works, and it's been great. It is FDIC insured and is a treasurer state program. I anticipate using it more in the future."

Nicely said the district now has about 10 percent of its cash revenue in the program.

Napoleon Area Schools treasurer Mike Bostelman said the district uses the program for a portion of its bond proceeds.

"It provides liquidity at a good rate of return, which is why we're using it," he said. "It seems to go through pretty smoothly. It works."

Many schools are taking part in the program. Out of the 320 government subdivisions taking part, a little more than half are schools, career centers and higher education facilities.

"You see a lot of schools signing up because school funding is a serious issue in the state," Mandel said. "They are looking at various opportunities to increase rate of return so there is more money to educate our children."

Mandel said one thing he likes about the program is that 30 community banks have been chosen to participate in the program, allowing money invested locally to stay in the area.

"We hope that number will continue to grow," he said. "We are proud of the fact that some of the local tax money will now stay in local community banks."

While the program has been deemed a success by many, Mandel said his office is always looking for improvements and seeking advice from government entities, as well as taxpayers to make it more efficient.



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"I've never looked at any government or state program and think it's perfect," he said, encouraging people to call the office at 614-466-2160 and ask for the STAR Plus department to leave comments. "We evaluate it (the program) on an ongoing basis. We take feedback constantly. The vast majority has been positive. People appreciate a higher interest program."

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