

Acton to offer breakfast to hungry school kids

By Wendy Long

This year Acton has a special New Year's resolution. Many churches and community volunteers have pulled together to make sure that no child has to go to school hungry.

The Dine and Dash Acton Children's Breakfast Club begins Monday, January 18. From 8 to 8:30 a.m., children can grab a nutritious breakfast from St. Alban's Church for a mere 25 cents.

If they can't afford the quarter, no one will be turned away.

"It's a pilot project," said co-ordinator Janet Cullen. "If it works out we will expand to other areas in town."

Food will be donated by the community, local businesses, and the Acton Foodshare. The breakfast will be buffet-style, and will offer foods such as hot and cold cereals, pancakes, muffins, and juice.

Cullen said the idea for the program came when Joan Waldie, coordinator of the Acton Foodshare, noticed the large number of families coming in with young children.

"Kids who don't go to school with a full tummy fall asleep by recess and they don't have the concentration," Cullen said. "Our goal is to feed the kids and provide a social environment for them."

Cullen hopes the Breakfast Club will appeal to many children. St. Alban's is across the bridge from Robert Little Public School.

"Teachers are really for it," Cullen said. "Statistics say that one out of every six kids lives below the poverty line."

Robert Little's teachers have volunteered to donate money from their monthly "Dress Down" day in support of the program.

Cullen is not afraid that not-so-needy children will take advantage of the 25 cent breakfasts.

"That's okay because that means the needy will be there too," said Cullen. "We encourage them to come so they (poorer children) won't be labeled. There are other ways a child can suffer poverty. Children can be lacking social skills, companionship and parental guidance."

Cullen is the wife of John Cullen, the pastor of the Acton Baptist Church. She has a degree in hotel and food administration and has worked in nutrition services for many years.



Janet Cullen, co-ordinator of the Dine and Dash program hopes that local businesses will help feed kids heading into school.

"The local churches are working together as a Christian Outreach program," Cullen said. "We want to show that the churches in town care about the needs of Acton by working together as one body of Christians."

The executive body of the Dine and Dash Acton Children's

Breakfast Club includes Cullen, Foodshare coordinator Joan Waldie, one volunteer from each church, and a public health nurse and public health nutritionist.

The Club is in need of volunteers, food and monetary donations to help run the program. For information contact Cullen at 853-2712.

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