

The Rockwood MILLER



Rockwood Centennial school to benefit from breakfast snacks

BY MAGGIE PETRUSHEVSKY
The New Tanner

19 per cent don't have breakfast

Organizers of the School Nutrition Program will start serving breakfast snacks to pupils at Rockwood's Centennial Public School next week.

Program coordinator Anita Macfarlane says a trial program was conducted at the school last year and both organizers who prepared the snacks and teachers who dealt with the pupils felt the effort was very successful.

The program stemmed from a national survey by the Canadian Living Foundation showing that nine-year-olds and girls aged 12 to 15 are especially prone to coming to school malnourished.

Rockwood teachers did their own survey last fall and determined 19 per cent of their children arrived in class without the nourishment they needed to remain energetic and concentrate until noon.

With research showing the strong connection between nutrition and learning, the breakfast snack program was set up with help from the school's Parents' Council. The big trick was to find a way to make food available to everyone

thereby eliminating any stigma for program participants. Their solution was to take trays of snacks to each classroom.

Macfarlane said it's difficult to judge whether the hungry children came from families without the resources to feed them properly, whether they did eat earlier but were hungry again by the time they arrived in class, or whether - especially with teenage girls - it's a case of peer pressure over body image.

"A lot of parents were surprised their children were participating in the program. They'd say their children weren't hungry. They had breakfast before they left the house," Macfarlane says.

"But we sent out snacks for everyone in each class. That amounted to 500 pieces of food daily and we'd only get an average of 45 pieces of food back (during the trials). Maybe they did eat already, but by the time they'd ridden the bus to school they were hungry again because there certainly weren't many kids

who weren't taking that snack. Even the teachers sometimes took a snack and you wouldn't assume they were hungry because they couldn't afford food."

Macfarlane is finalizing a menu for the program. In addition to putting variety in the snacks, organizers are concerned about potential problems with food allergies. Food handlers had a training day for the program earlier this week.

Based on costs from the trial period, the program costs about \$1,900 per month. That works out to 19 cents per pupil per day. Macfarlane says money raised last year will already cover the program's cost for half the year.

A fundraising barbecue at the school last week raised an additional \$1,400 for the program. Still more fundraisers are planned for next spring as well as hot dog days and assorted fundraisers throughout the year and walk or run-a-thon in order to involve the entire community.

Macfarlane says donations have also come in from community businesses. Some are monetary and others are "in kind".

Volunteers to help with food preparation would also be welcome.



ANTIQUÉ TRUCK: Rockwood firefighters recently received a model of a 1942 Mercedes Benz fire truck like those used near Lubeck, Germany. Seen during the presentation are from the left Guelph/Eramosa Mayor Dave Adsett, Deputy Fire Chief Tony Van Dam, councillor/firefighter Alan McDonald and donor Max Storey. - Maggie Petrushevsky photo



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