

# T&E Care launches school-meal assistance program

Program aims to help families ineligible for government aid

By Boyce Upholt

Tredyffrin/Easttown families that don't qualify for free or reduced-price school meals can get help this semester through a new program by T&E Care.

The school-meal assistance program will give at least \$10 per month for each child in qualifying families. As economic struggles pressure both families and school districts, T/E School District raised the price of school meals this year.

The program was inspired by an extended conversation among T&E Care members about children in Philadelphia going without lunch for the summer, but board members quickly realized the problem wasn't limited to the city — families in the district struggle, too.

Federal guidelines do not provide a sliding scale for families that need subsidies. If you make even \$100 more than the reduced-lunch limit — \$39,220 annually for a family of four — you

pay full price for meals. Lunch costs \$2.75 at Conestoga High School, well above the 40 cents for reduced lunch.

T&E Care's program will target families that don't qualify for subsidies, whether from the federal program or welfare and foster agencies. "If they qualify for free or reduced lunch they should apply," says Sandi Gorman, founder of T&E Care. "That program is better than ours."

T&E Care has set its own income guidelines, depending on the size of the household. A family of four qualifies if it makes less than \$44,520 per year. The family must ensure that none of their children has a negative balance of more than \$10 on their school meal point-of-sale accounts.

Since the money for the program will come mostly from donations, the amount of assistance provided may vary month to month, but the program is guaranteeing at least \$10 per month for the first semester of the school year. After that T&E Care

will re-evaluate the program to see if any changes are necessary.

"I have high expectations that it will continue," Gorman says. But since they are "inventing the wheel," as she says, they want to be able to make changes without strings attached.

The school district began contacting families that might be interested in the program at the beginning of the month. Families can apply through their school counselor.

Gorman is optimistic that T&E Care will get a grant from the Department of Community and Economic Development in November thanks to help from Reps. Carole Rubley (R-157) and Duane Milne (R-167), though that will be a one-time source of money.

"We definitely need community assistance," she says.

Interested people can make tax-deductible donations online at [tecare.org](http://tecare.org) or e-mail auxiliary board member Debbie Bookstaber at [deb@bookstaber.com](mailto:deb@bookstaber.com).