

T/E community supports members struggling

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Despite the coronavirus pandemic, the T/E community has found ways to come together. According to an April 17 update by Superintendent Richard Gussick, TESD parents and organizations have raised over \$10,000 in donations, supplies and gift cards to support those struggling because of the pandemic. The district and local organizations are working to distribute donations quickly and safely during the quarantine.

"Soon after the closing of school, I received notice from one of our counselors about a family in desperate need of food and other essential items. Moments later, I received an email from a parent saying, 'What can we do to help?' This parent then went out to purchase the items needed along with some gift cards and delivered them to my porch. On the same day, I was able to provide this generous support to the family in need," said Oscar Torres, the district's director of state and federal programs and curriculum supervisor. "Making connections such as this, while maintaining confidentiality, has been incredibly

gratifying as we continue to support our families in need."

The school's food services department and district administrators have also been providing breakfast and lunch to families who rely on those meals when children are in school, totaling about 5,000 meals every two weeks. In response to a need for technology because of distance learning, the district has provided over 130 iPads to students, and the Foundation for Learning in Tredyffrin/Easttown (FLITE) has worked to bring internet access to students and teachers.

"The nice thing about FLITE is we have a lot of really committed donors in our area, both individuals, businesses, as well as foundations. And as a result of that support, we've been able to maintain a little emergency fund, and so when something like COVID-19 happens fairly quickly, we can respond equally quickly," FLITE Chairman Vijay Aggarwal said. "In the case of internet access, we got a call from the superintendent of the T/E School District saying, 'Can you provide this internet access?' and we were able to say yes within maybe 36 hours."

FLITE has also been working to create programs to sup-

port those struggling because of the pandemic. The foundation is partnering with local charity Tredyffrin & Easttown Care (T&E Care), which has received over \$85,000 in donations since the lockdown began. T&E Care President Sandi Gorman explains that the organization works mainly to help community members pay rent and utility bills to ensure that "people don't get caught with monster bills in two or three months because they just haven't paid them." With T&E Care's help, families are able to use money originally designated to paying a bill to buy food.

"We are spending a lot of money, so it's great to have that money coming in, but never in my wildest dreams did we expect to see this much money get donated to us," Gorman said. "It just makes it easier for us to be able to say yes when somebody comes to us with a request because we know the community is there helping to support us."

Gorman appreciates all that the community has done during the pandemic.

"We live in a community that is just extremely generous and wants to help their neighbors," Gorman said. "When we started T&E Care 15 years ago — almost

16 now — we discovered this community of people that just really believed in helping their neighbors, and the community of people who want to help is growing and growing and growing. It's just been really staggering how many people are out there wanting to help."

Aside from local foundations, parent organizations have also worked hard to support those in need. Among the parent groups helping to pull together donations is the Chinese American Parent Association of Tredyffrin/Easttown (CAPA-TE), which has contributed over \$6,000 via 165 gift cards to Target, Acme, Wawa, Wegmans and CVS Pharmacy to the district for distribution to families.

"It's one Earth, one hope for everybody, so it takes everybody's efforts to deal with it and to cope with the situation," said Jianhua Jiang, the chair of CAPA-TE's Youth Development Committee. "Everybody's involved. Everybody's contributing. Everybody has to do something to help those who are in need."

CAPA-TE also offers free tutoring options and food-shopping teams to help reduce pressure on people who are struggling because of the pandemic. TESD

parent and CAPA-TE member Qingfen Zhang, who made a donation through the group, echoes this sentiment.

"The coronavirus pandemic we're facing is unprecedented. I've never experienced something like this in my life previously, and because of the lockdown, many families are struggling," Zhang said. "The money is one thing,

and it may help them a little, but I think it's a way to show we care and to have solidarity with people in our community who are having a difficult time. It's a sign to say, you know, 'we know you're struggling, and we care.'"

In times of hardship, the T/E community has united to provide support to its families. Jeanne Braun, coordinator of communi-

ty and volunteer services for the school district, is amazed at the community's generosity.

"This is very emotional for me. The outpouring and genuine generosity of our community is incredible, as is the gratitude our families feel when others help them," Braun said. "To have a small role in this is really a privilege."

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during pandemic