

Breakfast is Ready

St. Luke's Lutheran Church in Kitchener gathers around 70 school children for breakfast every school day. The breakfast program began eleven years ago when **Karin Meilke**, a member of St. Luke's heard of the community program offered to schools by an organization called **Nutrition for Learning**. The people of St. Luke's decided to respond to the need of the community and started the program in partnership with a neighbouring school and Nutrition for Learning.

"The program is open to any child who attends **Franklin Public School**, whose property is beside the church. The school is for students from Junior Kindergarten to Grade 6. It is an asset that the church is able to provide the facility", says **Cathy Dowling** who has served as a program coordinator for the last nine years.

"The children are served a varied menu of breakfast items including one hot dish each day.

The food items are appropriate for a Halal diet as we have a cross-section of immigrant children who attend each day", Cathy Dowling explains.

After finishing their breakfast, before it is time to leave for school, students can engage in quiet activities such as games, drawing or writing. On Thursdays, university students from the Masters of Kinesiology program at **Laurier University, Waterloo**, run a physical activity program for the students. This is possible through the financial support of **Sunlife Financial foundation for Healthy Kids**.

St. Luke's breakfast program is the work of many partners. All are committed to the same vision "to enhance the ability to learn by ensuring that each student attends school well nourished". There are seven volunteers from the congregation serving breakfast and interacting with the children each morning; other volunteers are coordinated with Nutrition for Learning. In addition, students from the Registered Nursing program at **Conestoga College** complete their community service course requirements by coming in once per week during their terms.

Financial support for the program comes in part from Nutrition for Learning, who receives its funding from the Ontario Government and local fundraising. Two-thirds of the funding comes, however, from the community. The school parent council, the **Stanley Park Optimists** and St. Luke's congregation are the main contributors.

"We often reach out to the congregation for gifts in kind: socks, cereal, paper to name a few. The public has the opportunity to donate funds to Nutrition for Learning or specifically to the Breakfast Club", says Cathy Dowling.

– Rev. Riitta Hepomaki



Some of our volunteers: left to right: Alan Chambers, Madison Welkom, Hertz Eichinger, and Ross Gray in the background.



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