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Shelburne Home Hardware fundraiser boosts local school breakfast programs

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LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

In an effort to ensure local students don't attend school hungry, Shelburne Home Hardware held its annual tent and yard sale on June 7, with a fundraiser to raise capital for beleaguered school breakfast programs in town.

The weekend tent and yard sale at Shelburne Home Hardware delivered another strong boost to local school breakfast programs, raising approximately $750 for the Kids Breakfast program.

Store owner Bill Gillam is matching the total himself, bringing the event's impact to about $1,500 for children in local schools, in what he described as a personal mission.

?I found that in the community, the breakfast program for the kids at schools, local schools, was underfunded,? he said. ?So I asked the town representative what was needed in town, what was underfunded, and [the breakfast] program was very difficult to run and just needed some funding, so that's how this all got started, from that conversation.?

The fundraiser was held as part of Gillam's long-running Donate a Plate initiative, which channels community donations into breakfast programs at five area schools.

Customers contribute at the till and sign their names on red and yellow plates that are displayed on the wall. Over 11 years, that approach, combined with matched contributions, has generated more than $160,000 for the Breakfast Club of Canada.

Gillam said he takes any opportunity he can to raise more funds for the kids. While his primary fundraising season is around Christmas, other community events offer further opportunities to raise more money to send.

?Whenever we have an event during the year, and I have the ability to raise some dollars for the Donate a Plate program, kids breakfast program, then I will do it,? he said. ?This was an opportune weekend, for the yard and garden sale. We had some of the local school representatives, teachers and students come in and run the barbecue here, just to let everybody know that at our school, we get to go have breakfast, and this is how we come out and raise money for that.?

Funds are directed through the Wellington Dufferin Children's Foundation, with the understanding that the funds will be returned to local schools to purchase food. The goal is to ensure that any student who needs breakfast can access it without barriers.

Events like the recent tent and yard sale, along with school-supported barbecues and playful December campaigns featuring Gillam's Christmas suits as additional fundraisers, have turned Donate a Plate into a dedicated and consistent fundraiser in Shelburne.

Each new fundraiser becomes another opportunity to support local kids and keep breakfast programs running in the face of rising need.