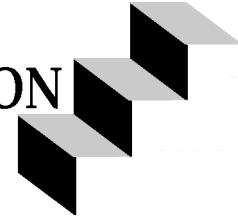


**EDUCATION
FOUNDATION
OF BLOOMINGTON**



**2575 West 88th Street
Bloomington, MN 55431**

For immediate use
November 5, 2009

For more information, contact
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Children's Food for Thought serves growing number of Bloomington students

Bloomington students whose families are struggling financially and find it difficult to meet lunch money demands can eat free nourishing meals, thanks to Children's Food for Thought, a program of the Education Foundation of Bloomington.

"Children's Food for Thought provides free school meals for K-12 students whose household income is not low enough to qualify for federally funded free or reduced-priced meals at school," said Ann Tillotson.

"A single incident, such as job loss, low or irregular income or an uninsured medical situation can disrupt family income to the point that there is no money for school lunches," she said. In the current economic climate, Children's Food for Thought is helping growing numbers of Bloomington students.

Tillotson founded and manages the Education Foundation of Bloomington program, which operates with donations from businesses, the faith community and individuals. EFB is a 501.c.3. nonprofit organization.

A 2005 pilot program at Normandale Hills Elementary tested the idea, which expanded to all nine elementary schools in 2006 and now serves students in all of Bloomington's 14 public schools.

“We have seen a significant increase in demand to use the fund,” noted Tillotson. “More students will need help with meals as families face these difficult financial times.” In the 2008-09 school year, the program provided approximately 3,200 lunches to students in need.

“Confidentiality is critical in connecting students to the program,” Tillotson explained. “Older students often will go hungry rather than have their peers know they’re getting free meals,” according to Tillotson. Caring school staff can spot students who need help and their meal payments are handled so that no one in the lunch line can tell.

CFT also works as a bridge so kids can have lunches while the family’s application for free or reduced-priced school meals is pending. CFT can act immediately because no application is involved and the donated funds are accounted for separately from the federal school lunch program. School food service staff handles CFT funds by making a request for the number of students who need the meals.

Lunch prices range from \$2.25 to \$2.55, so a \$15 donation provides more than a week’s meals for any student in the Bloomington school system. Donations to Children’s Food for Thought can be made through PayPams, which handles school lunch payments by credit card, or by check to the Education Foundation of Bloomington, 2575 W. 88th St., Bloomington, 55431.