

■ **NUTRITION:** Program provides breakfast and lunch for students in need

# A donation you can sink your teeth into

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WELLAND — Eastdale Secondary School welcomed a \$1,500 cheque yesterday towards its student nutrition program.

The funds were donated by the Education Foundation of Niagara, which is one of several organizations that donates to the program each year.

Lunch program co-ordinator Mike Holmes estimates it costs \$8,000 to \$9,000 a year to run the school food program. Funds help with the purchase of program supplies used to prepare sandwiches, breakfast cereals and other nutritional items. Holmes said the program provides a free meal for students who may otherwise be unable to get the nutrition they need.

"It's tough for kids to focus on an empty stomach," he said, adding "breakfast is the most important meal of the day."

Eastdale's special needs students participate in the program by preparing sandwiches at lunch as part of their work experience class.

Holmes said students are not required to give a name or sign up for the program, so they don't have to feel embarrassed about accepting food.

The lunch program has experienced a sharp increase in student use, he said. The sandwich supply often runs out before need is fulfilled.

Because of a ban on peanut products in schools, Holmes said the nutrition program has had to switch from peanut



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Eastdale Secondary School special needs students and lunch program participants Melissa Alakas and Danny Ristic, accept a cheque for \$1,500 from Education Foundation of Niagara executive director Julie Densham, with Education Foundation of Niagara director Bob Lewis and lunch room co-ordinator Mike Holmes, in back. The money will be used to fund the school's nutritional program, which provides breakfast and lunch for students in need. The foundation also made a trip to Princess Elizabeth Public School yesterday where they donated \$4,000 towards its literacy program.

butter and jelly, to ham and cheese sandwiches, which are more costly. He's thankful for the assistance of organizations such as the EFN, because without them the program would be increasingly difficult to keep running. "For the school to continue to do it without the funding, we just couldn't do it."

EFN executive director Julie Densham estimated her organization donated \$35,000 across the District School Board of Niagara for nutrition

programs in 2008.

"It's not just about getting the food because (students) are hungry, but getting the proper nutrition in their diet," she said.

The more support a child receives, the more the child is able to learn and become successful, which is in the end better for the community, Densham said.

There are about 40,000 students in the public board schools. Densham said one in six lives in poverty.