

The Standard

17 Queen Street, St. Catharines 905.684.7251

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Education foundation makes a difference for students

FUNDRAISING

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Julie Densham has no shortage of stories to tell.

There's the one about the parents who couldn't afford new eyeglasses for their child last fall but they promised to buy a pair as a present for the child's birthday in July.

Or the boy in Grade 6, who desperately wants to go on a class trip. He's not happy at home and the trip would give him a break. The only problem is, he doesn't have the money to pay for it.

"This is all he wants to do," Densham said. "When you're the one left behind, that's tough to forget. These are the things that shape you."

Densham, executive director of the Education Foundation of Niagara, and her colleagues do what they can to ensure that what's not forgotten are more pleasant memories.

They do it with the foundation's Poverty and Emergency Relief Fund, which supports emergency, personal or school-related needs of individual students facing financial hardship.

But as the week-long Make Change for Children campaign kicked off Monday to replenish fund coffers, Densham worried about how the foundation would be able to continue to help young Niagarans in need.

Given the economy, she's unsure the campaign will reach its \$25,000 goal. And so begins the Catch-22.

"It makes me concerned because if we're not reaching our goal because the economy can't support the fundraising mechanism, then I know I'm going to have more kids coming for support," Densham said. "It's frustrating. We know the need is going to increase in the next few years."

For now, however, 75 District School Board of Niagara schools are fundraising for the Make Change Campaign, which helped 948 children last year "get over a hump." Some have set out donation boxes to collect spare pocket change from staff, students and school visitors.

Schools that don't take part have chosen other important causes to support, Densham said.

What the foundation doesn't make up in money, she's hopeful will be made up in awareness -- the other crucial element to the Make Change drive.

"It's not too much to ask," she said. "It's only the change from our pockets."

For more information or to donate, visit www.efnonline.ca or call 905-641-2929 ext. 4104.

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