

# Townfolk look to feed hungry students

By **ROB GLIDDEN**  
STAFF WRITER

Administrators of the Southington Public Schools recently announced a partnership with several local goodwill groups to provide breakfast to hungry students.

During a press conference held last week, Superintendent Dr. Joseph Erardi announced that Bread for Life, United Way, the Calvanese Foundation and Parents 4 A Change would all be coming

together for a joint project designed to provide for students going without breakfast in the morning.

"There are more children coming to school every morning with an empty stomach," Erardi said. "This is a community initiative to take care of these children."

The funding provided from these outside groups will allow three elementary schools to offer breakfast to students before schools. Flanders Elementary

School has had this program active for the past few months, and in February the district hopes to expand it to Thalberg and Derynoski Elementary Schools.

The program got off the ground when Flanders Principal Patricia Mazzarella told Erardi she knew of many children coming into the school without having eaten breakfast.

"In some cases, the kids told the nurses that

they had no breakfast or that they were hungry," Mazzarella said. "Teachers also noticed that there were days when some students could not stay on task."

About 25 students were taking advantage of the opportunity each day at Flanders, and the staff of the other two elementary schools expects similar, if not greater, numbers. When the program is up and running in all three schools, the district

expects about 100 total students to receive daily breakfast.

Representatives from the school district said that doing their part to keep students fed and healthy was a major part of their responsibility to Southington children.

"Children can't learn if they're hungry," said Board of Education member Pat Johnson. "That's a very basic tenet."

Leaders of the various groups involved all

expressed their commitment to the cause, and Bread for Life board chairman William McDougall said he hoped the service could eventually be extended to all the schools.

Chairman Brian Goralski said the effort would not be possible without the generosity of Southington at large.

"We value these partnerships in the community," he said. "It's a privilege for our board to see these opportunities."

## Soiree: event to help promote the upcoming Big Read

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Falcon."

"We wanted a book that would appeal to both women and men," said Library Director Sue Smayda. "It also happens to be a favorite of mine."

Guests were encouraged to dress in clothes appropriate to the time period, and those whose costumes were deemed the best got the chance to be featured on a "Tough Guys (and gals) Do Read" poster in their outfits.

Several town officials had already posed for these posters, which were hung all over the library



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Even tough bears read.

during the event.

Susan Sterniak was one of the winners. Her costume involved gloves from her mother and other

garments acquired at various times over the years.

"The whole ensemble was cobbled together from different areas," she said.

The Lord family was also collectively recognized for coming together and in costume.

Jean Minahan was the winner in a trivia contest based on the book.

The library also recruited musical talent to help set the mood. The Mike Roth jazz ensemble, the Southington Chamber Singers, and former Town Councilor David Zoni all performed music appropriate to the era.

The soiree was also a

big night for students at the Alternative High School (ALTA). They greeted guests at the door in tuxedos and dresses, checking coats and offering copies of the book to those who came.

"The whole senior class is part of the Big Read," said student Nicole Tsiartas. "I'm a big reader and I liked the book."

The male students got

their tuxedos courtesy of Modern Formals, while the dresses came from Deb Fashions. Smayda commented that the students "look like they are on their way to the Oscars."

Most of ALTA's faculty also attended the event.

"Almost half of our school is here and they are very excited," said English teacher Anita Holtz. "When those clothes came

and they tried them on, it was electric."

Sam Spade impersonator John Christiance was on hand to help Smayda and the rest of the library staff with the proceedings, and said he hoped the Big Read would draw more people to literature.

"The idea is to get people to read and see what's available in the library," Christiance said.

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