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"FLITE takes off in the community"

by Seth Zweifler (News Copy Editor)

Since the beginning of the school year, the nonprofit educational organization FLITE, the Foundation for Learning in Tredyffrin/ Easttown school district, has been working to provide all students in the district with equal opportunities. FLITE is currently expanding its programs to reach more children in need. FLITE, which was officially founded in March 2006, aims to help students who do not have adequate financial, emotional or environmental support to succeed in school. In the past year, the organization has worked on tutoring programs, transportation plans and easily accessible extra-curricular groups. "There are some kids in the school district who don't have access to the things that others have, and these students are essentially competing with these kids who do," said chair of FLITE's communications committee Sandi Gorman. "Thus, we felt strongly that a program needed to be started to help all kids have an equal shot at a good education. [...] Our main goal with FLITE was and still remains to provide all students with these opportunities so they can perform to the best of their abilities."

Although FLITE is not funded by the district, it shares many of the same educational practices and goals as those that are stressed in classrooms. Within the past year, FLITE has established four programs, all of which have been approved by the district. Three of these programs are currently active. The largest group, Homework Oasis, received approval in May 2006 and is currently in place at Valley Forge Middle School. Led by guidance counselor Andy Mullen, this after-school program aims to provide a quiet and supportive environment for students to complete homework and study for tests. "Last year I noticed a pattern in school performance which was connected with an inconsistency in completing assigned school work at home," Mullen said. "My hypothesis was that if I could create the ideal setting for work completion here at school, we would see an improvement in school performance, self-esteem and attitude."

The Homework Oasis program has experienced success in its first official year. Students involved with the group have, for the most part, improved their grades, test scores and pride in their work. Other approved FLITE programs include the T/E Homework Club, Music in Our Schools and the Elementary After-School Club.

FLITE remains funded completely through donations. Thus, it relies heavily upon the community to provide financial assistance that will allow for the expansion of the programs. FLITE recently established a system where tax deductible donations can be made in the name of a T/E staff member. All donations made in the name of a staff member go directly to FLITE, and the chosen recipient will be individually informed of the honor. Forms to make these donations can be found at the FLITE website, www.flite-pa.org.

In addition to making donations, Conestoga students and teachers can get involved with

FLITE and the various programs it offers to younger students. These programs have received praise from Conestoga and have attracted the interest of members of the administration. "I think FLITE is a fantastic organization with an admirable mission," Principal Timothy Donovan said. "It expands the already strong connection that the T/E District has with the community and gives everybody a chance to get involved."