

# T&E Care helping those in need

By Brent Glasgow

*bglasgow@journalregister.com*

Started seven years ago to assist those affected by Hurricane Katrina, T&E Care has become a necessary resource for underprivileged families and individuals in Tredyffrin and Easttown townships.

"While poverty is somewhat hidden in this community, there are people that are struggling," T&E Care board member Barbara McConnell said. "Our purpose is to try to help people get back on their feet."

In 2005, the group began by helping three New Orleans families relocate to the area. They arranged affordable lodging at a local hotel, got their kids into school and gave them supplies, came up with a car and provided a general support structure. Two of the families ended up staying, and a permanent charitable group was born.

"It was an amazing pulling together of the community to help people that they didn't know, who were having to start all over," McConnell said. "The feeling that came out of that was, 'This feels really good,' and there are so many people here willing to help, that it would've been a shame to shut it down."

Since receiving official nonprofit status in 2006, T&E Care has helped dozens of families in a variety of ways. The group functions almost entirely online, and in coordination with churches, schools, law enforcement and well over 600 e-mail recipients, receives tips and requests for assistance. That can include help with rent, utility bills, food, finding a job, college costs, medical needs, clothing, household goods, furniture, legal advice and more.

With the economic downturn, both need and generosity increased.

"Since 2008, the demands have gotten greater," McConnell said. "We worried that donations would shrink up as some people faced their own hardships, but that hasn't been the case. The community continues to step up and help us with whatever we're working on."

The upcoming arrival of winter brings T&E Care's most active season.

"It is a busy time due to heating costs," McConnell said. "There are so many urgent requests for help with utilities. You don't want people freezing in their homes, and they do, because food and medicine can come before heat, and you have to make your choices. We don't want anyone to be in that situation."

In addition to its service-by-request during the winter, T&E Care provides Thanksgiving meals for those who need it, and has a holiday gift drive.

One of T&E Care's most successful efforts is its backpack-stuffing program. With the help of volunteers and the T&E Kids Care club at Conestoga High School, a total of 181 backpacks filled with supplies were given to area children this fall, up from 40 in its first year.

"It's crazy, but with so many people helping, we're done in about three hours," McConnell said. "Then the bags are taken to the schools for parents to pick up, and for those that don't have cars, we deliver."

Along with monetary donations and gift cards, fully functional vehicles are an open-ended request at T&E Care.

"Finding a good job and keeping a good job relies on transportation, so unless you're looking for a job right on the train line here, you really need a car," McConnell said. "So many don't have them, so we're asking that if anyone's ever at a point where they're getting a new car, if they can, instead of trading in the old one, we'd ask that they consider giving it to us."

While T&E Care has received a few grants, virtually all of its funding comes from donations and fundraisers. Its biggest event is its Fall Festival, this year titled "Rockin' It for T&E Care," which is Nov. 10 at St. Davids Golf Club in Wayne. The fundraiser will feature live music and dancing, appetizers, a buffet dinner, open bar and a silent auction.

"This is our fifth year for the Fall Fest, and it's our largest source of income each year," McConnell said.

For more information on Fall Fest and T&E Care, go to [www.tecares.org](http://www.tecares.org).