

Hot-dog hawker relishes role in helping schools

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Lowell Sun

Article Last Updated:06/26/2007 11:37:21 AM EDT

LITTLETON -- Hot dogs and sausages sizzle on the grill. Inside the steamy cart, Ed Howard butters each bun and pours cheese to make "cheesy weenies."

"Fast Eddie, how are ya, buddy?" asks customer Bob Brown as he orders a grilled hot dog. Howard's hot-dog business, Ed's Weenies, is a popular lunch destination on Route 119. Customers come from Littleton and surrounding towns to grab a grilled dog, while many consider Howard to be a friend. To thank the community for that support, Howard decided to donate all of his tips to Littleton's public schools to buy library books. He started collecting tips in early June and will continue to donate money for the entire school year. "This is something that would benefit everyone in the school system," Howard says. He has already donated more than \$2,000 to the schools. A couple weeks ago, Howard had a kickoff promotion, donating all sales and tips from an entire day. **Basnett Plumbing and Heating**, a Littleton business, matched Howard's amount, and together they donated more than \$1,800. "This is a great opportunity to give back to the community," says Maryann Swift, marketing director for Basnett Plumbing. Howard also donated a day's sales to Littleton High School's class of 2010, and set up his cart while the student band, Cloud 9, played a concert at Faye Park. Retired from the retail business, Howard, 64, of Acton, thought selling hot dogs would be a fun way to meet people. He began over a year ago with a small cart, like something you'd see outside Fenway Park. Now, Howard has a custom-ordered trailer with red and yellow awnings. But establishing his business wasn't easy. Howard first got permission to set up shop on town-owned land on Route 119, but ran into roadblocks last summer when he wanted to move to Gary's Farm Stand down the road. Gary's Farm Stand is zoned residential, while some thought Howard's hot-dog business would alter the use of the property. Last summer, the Zoning Board of Appeals granted Howard a variance to open. With a hat that says, "Ed's Weenies Frankly Fabulous," Howard insists it's his special-ordered beef and pork hot dogs that continue to draw a crowd. "It's a quality dog," he says. His customers say Howard is the other reason they come back. "There's none greater than Ed," says customer Clem Tyler from Boxboro. "He's got a big heart, and his heart is in the right place."