

Dwindling Funds Threaten to Halt Breakfast for School Children 35

When members of the Black Student Union (BSU) began serving free breakfasts to neighborhood children two months ago, some critics said they were biting off more than they could chew.

The program has expanded so fast that the BSU might run out of the money it needs to feed 170 young black children who now crowd into Westminster Community House, 421 Monroe St., each school morning.

"We wanted to show the younger brothers and sisters that we haven't forgotten them," said Charles Autrey, 19, State University of Buffalo freshman who heads the breakfast program. "We've started something we just can't stop."

So the soft-spoken, bushy-haired Mr. Autrey and the other BSU members who rise at 6 AM to help prepare the breakfasts are appealing to the public for its support.

They will use the money to buy more eggs, beef, milk, juice and fruits which they prepare for the school children who begin arriving at 6 AM.

The children are seated at three long tables in Westminster's main dining room under a poster of Malcolm X.

Seated at the end of the center table was Daniel Kenner, 10, of 555 Sycamore St., who was thoughtfully inspecting an apple turnover in one hand and a glass of milk in the other.

"I like it here because we get something to eat," said Daniel,

who attends fifth grade at nearby School 41 on Jefferson St. "They have good things to eat," he said, nodding toward the turnover.

Mr. Autrey, the program chairman, said he had hoped to be able to expand the operation to 250 children next month by offering breakfasts at the new Puerto Rican American Association Community Center in addition to those served at Westminster House.

Now he fears that he will have to cancel the program in five to seven weeks unless new funds are found.

The 40-member organization of UB students began serving free breakfasts to children in the School 41 neighborhood in mid-October with two grants totaling \$5,200 from the UB Student Association.

Mr. Autrey said representatives of the student association promised to contribute another \$28,000 to keep the program in operation but then called for a campus referendum when some white students opposed such a grant.

The referendum was held before Thanksgiving, but was declared invalid amid charges of ballot-stuffing.

An embittered Mr. Autrey blamed "liberal" white students for opposing the student association grant and white students in general for the voided referendum.

The BSU's shrinking breakfast treasury still contains about \$3,000 of the original student association grants but with food expenses mounting to \$750 a week, that can't last long.

Mr. Autrey said the BSU would try to continue the program even if it failed to get student funds or reach a goal of \$25,000 in public contributions. "We'll start using money out of our own pockets," he said. "These kids look up to us."

The BSU already has begun to drive for breakfast funds but so far the response has been scattered.

"We've raised \$1,600 so far from different organizations — from Tonawanda, Snyder, Egbertsville — but nothing from Buffalo," said Mr. Autrey.

"We were hoping some people in the community would show us some support before we have to go begging. These are their kids."

*UB Student Association
BSU + the breakfast program*