

Donors defray students' bus costs

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A dress-down day last week and several donations will allow for discounted bus passes for Scranton High School students through the end of the school year.

But come September, the district will face the same problem: how to get kids to school.

Some students who live in South Scranton, including in the low-income housing developments, have walks of 4 miles to get to the high school.

For about two years, donations allowed the district to offer a monthly County of Lackawanna Transit System

bus pass for \$5, instead of \$20. COLTS student passes are now \$24 per child, which families and community advocates say can be a challenge for a family on a fixed income.

Children either must pay the public bus fare, find a ride or walk. Getting to school is another obstacle the students in the area's poorest neighborhoods, including Valley View Terrace and Hilltop Manor; must overcome, the advocates say.

"The cost ends up being a hurdle," Superintendent William King said. "We're trying to do whatever we can to eliminate those barriers."

In Pennsylvania, school districts are not required to provide any transportation to students, and Scranton transports only some elementary and intermediate school students. It provides no bus- ing for high school students.

With \$7,500 in recent donations, the district can now offer monthly passes for \$10 instead of \$24 — a big savings for families on a limited budget, especially those with multiple high school students, Mr. King said.

The Lackawanna County Workforce Investment Board donated \$5,000, the Advocacy Alliance gave \$2,000, and \$500

was donated by Covenant Presbyterian Church. A dress-down day on Thursday at Scranton High, in which students and staff donate money to wear more casual clothes, raised more than \$1,000.

But the district is now once again looking for a long-term solution.

Last summer, Mr. King approached the University of Scranton about helping to fund bus passes. The university is still trying to determine how to help, spokesman Stan Zygmunt said.

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