

Dictionary Dinner

*Southside Elementary School
Buffalo, New York*

Garfield might have been on the cover of the book that third- and fourth-grade students received in the Southside Elementary cafeteria one evening last fall, but they weren't about to sit down and read the funnies. Each student attending the event received a *Merriam-Webster Illustrated Garfield Dictionary*, given to promote literacy.

When students and their families arrived, they walked into a cafeteria filled with balloons, flowers, and the aroma of a complimentary dinner that included baked chicken, potatoes, vegetables, salad, pasta, and desserts. For those students whose parents could not attend, the PTO provided volunteers to escort them. The school librarian explained to the students how they could use their new dictionaries and then held a question-and-answer session.

An alumnus of the school provided the dinner at cost. The school paid for the food and dictionaries, calling it "money well spent." Southside Elementary staff set up the cafeteria and helped serve dinner. PTO volunteers, some of whom did not even have children in third or fourth grade, made posters for the event and sent invitations to parents.

Nearly 200 students, family members, and school staff attended the event. Parents enjoyed the opportunity to spend more time with their children and have a dinner at the school that did not include pizza and pop. They also liked getting to know their children's friends and their families. Everyone appreciated the benefits that would come from each student having his/her own dictionary. As the

principal remarked, "This was an outstanding event!" And now it is one that the school plans to hold annually.

*Linda Helmbrecht, ATP Member
(716) 816-4818*