



**Courtesy of Daphne Klahr** | Vanessa Wanshop, left, director of volunteer services at Reading Hospital, and Daphne Klahr, executive director of the Reading Recreation Commission, with the new food service van purchased with funds raised by Friends of Reading Hospital, an all-volunteer fundraising wing of Reading Health System.

## **Kelly's Korner: Van donation boosts food project for Reading kids**

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By **Dan Kelly**

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Being the executive director of a recreation commission in a distressed city, Daphne Klahr often must rely on the kindness of others.

The Reading Recreation Commission was down to a handful of employees and most of the city's rec centers had been shut down when the city fathers decided to merge recreation services with the Reading School District.

Since then, Klahr and her dedicated staff have breathed new life into the city's recreation department.

When looking at the needs of the children of Reading, Klahr said it became evident that many kids were coming to the recreation center hungry. The department started its own version of Meals on Wheels and began delivering meals to children throughout the city.

Still scrimping and scraping by, the commission used an old ambulance as its food service van. But not anymore.

Klahr said she met with Vanessa Wanshop, director of volunteer services at Reading Hospital.

"The whole project happened as a result of a conversation that Vanessa Wanshop and I had a few months ago about the Reading Recreation Commission's needs in regards to food delivery," Klahr said.

The food service program is on track to deliver 22,000 meals and snacks in 2016. For 2014 and 2015 combined, over 37,000 meals and snacks were delivered. Dinner and snacks are served to more than 150 students on a daily basis in the recreation department's after-school programs. Another 200 students are fed in the 21st Century Community Learning programs held at various city schools.

Wanshop is liaison to the Friends of Reading Hospital, a volunteer group that holds golf outings and other benefits. She added the food service van to a list of nonprofits that would benefit from a golf outing held this year.

Klahr said the van is brand new 2016 Ford Transit T150 with an estimated value of \$32,000. The Friends of Reading Hospital bought the van from Tom Masano Ford and Lincoln. When Masano heard how the van would be used, the company threw in customized shelving valued at \$870.

And Klahr used \$3,800 from National Recreation and Park Association and the Wal-Mart Foundation to add a customized "wrap," designed by Sign Pros of Temple, so the van would be easily identifiable and to promote the program.

"The City of Reading is insuring the vehicle, supplying the fuel and helping with routine maintenance and care," Klahr said. "This van is truly a collaborative effort to help feed kids healthy meals and shows what great things can happen when groups work together."

*In Kelly's Korner, Dan Kelly writes about the people and personalities that make Berks County special. Contact him 610-371-5040 or [dkelly@readingeagle.com](mailto:dkelly@readingeagle.com).*