

Strongman is pulling for students

Conor Kelly set to drag a school bus through Yonge-Dundas Square

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Toronto strongman Conor Kelly is – literally and figuratively – pulling for underprivileged youngsters to get a good start to each day.

The 5'7", 190-pound Kelly will be pulling a 28,000-pound school bus through Yonge-Dundas Square on Saturday, Oct. 10 as part of the Toronto Federation for Student Success' (TFSS) Feeding Toronto's Hungry Students Week.

A fitness and nutrition specialist, Kelly decided to take on the daunting challenge after a guest speaking appearance at Crescent School. He said a presentation made by students at the school in which they spoke of how many students must start each day without breakfast opened his eyes to the challenges faced by many students.

"The students talked about malnutrition in today's youth, and that made me decide to take action," he said.

"I know nutrition plays an

important role in academics and health."

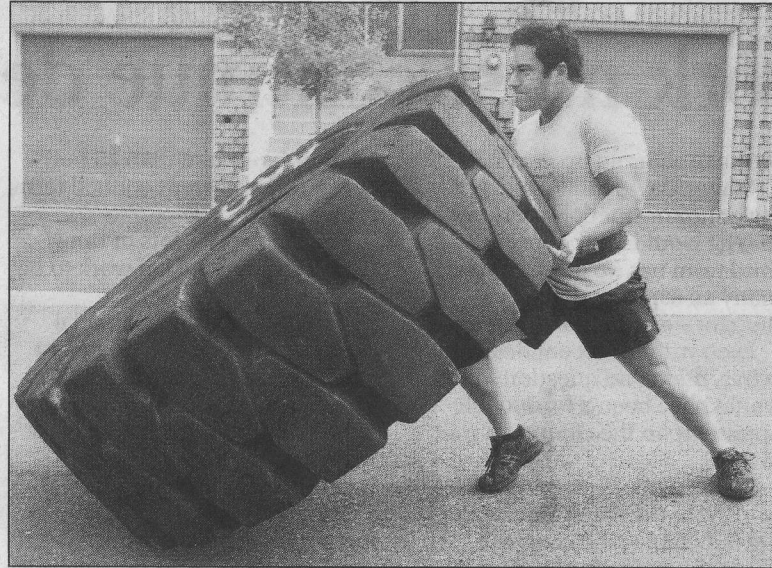
The numbers surrounding student hunger are sobering. With one in three Toronto children living in poverty, it comes as a surprise that some 68 per cent do not have breakfast every day, and 21 per cent never do. An additional 54 per cent of students do not have lunch on a daily basis.

Kelly, who both lives and operates his business, Evolution Fitness, in the Yonge and Bloor streets area, knows full well the value of maintaining a healthy diet, which includes a daily breakfast.

He is also no stranger to hauling heavy objects. A few years ago, he competed in provincial strongman competitions, for which dragging heavy vehicles is one of the events.

His upcoming feat, however, will undoubtedly pose a challenge unlike any he has faced before.

"I was a lot heavier back (when he was competing,)" he said. "I was about 40 pounds heavier."



Photo/ANDRE PATRICK

NOT TIRED: Conor Kelly lifts and flips a 320 kilogram tire Saturday as he trains for his upcoming bus pull through Yonge-Dundas Square on Oct. 10. Kelly will be pulling a 28,000-pound school bus as part of Toronto Federation for Student Success' Feeding Toronto's Hungry Students Week events.

He hopes solid technique, good conditioning, endurance and agility will help him achieve his goal of pulling the bus 100 feet, but acknowledged his work is cut out for him.

"It's a bit of a David versus Goliath story," he said. "I just have to pump my feet and keep going."

Kelly's challenge is symbolic in a few ways.

– By hauling a school bus, it will

serve as a nod to the youth who have to go to school each day with empty stomachs. The daunting task he faces, he said, reflects the uphill battle the TFSS must deal with as they work to ensure students do not go hungry.

"I want to put forth an effort like what (the TFSS) puts forth on a daily basis," he said.

"It's a giant undertaking and they have a small staff."

Kelly has been training hard for the event for the past few months, embarking on a rigorous weight-training regimen and dragging a weighted sled.

His impressive attempt at pulling a bus across Yonge-Dundas Square will be part of a larger event to help put an end to student hunger.

In addition to Kelly's feat, there will be live entertainment, raffles, kids' games and activities including a strong kids competition, fitness workshops and more.

The event will take place at Yonge-Dundas Square from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Saturday, Oct. 10.

Kelly is scheduled for his pull at 2 p.m.

For more information, or to donate to Kelly's cause, visit www.pullingforthecure.com