

EDIBLE ENDEAVOR – Naperville restaurants raise funds for charity

Front Page

Soup-er debut

Rotary's fall fundraiser deemed a success

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When the plans for Oktoberfest's replacement were beginning to take shape, nobody was predicting that soup kitchens would be water-cooler fodder when the day of the event arrived. Then the economy took a nose dive, and references to The Great Depression began to crop up, giving excruciating currency to the cause.

The Rotary Club of Naperville's inaugural Soup's On! benefit, held Sunday afternoon in the Tellabs atrium on Diehl Road, aimed to support three local charities that are working hard to keep up with an ever-growing population of local hungry and homeless - in much the same way as the soup kitchens and bread lines that arose following the stock market crash nearly eight decades ago.

In this case, more than two dozen restaurants and merchants in Naperville and surrounding towns, and many dozens of volunteers, stepped up to help. Virtually everyone wanted to do their part.

"Even in these tough economic times, I think 98 percent of the restaurants that we contacted said yes - and it was an enthusiastic yes," said Karen Garlough, who co-chaired the fundraiser with her husband, current Rotary president Bill Garlough.

The endeavor was devised to replace the organization's annual Oktoberfest celebration. After a 16-year run, club members decided a year ago to discontinue the three-day party in downtown Naperville, citing low turnout among the contributing factors.

Working to appeal to soup lovers of all shapes and sizes, the 26 food providers and several more exhibitors filled the airy atrium space. Set up near the front door was a spacious play area, hosted by the DuPage Children's Museum, with kid-friendly snacks and juice boxes offered nearby. At the other tables scattered across the enticingly fragrant lobby, local restaurants tempted visitors with sandwiches, breads, artisan cheeses, lush desserts - and a vast array of gourmet soups and other savory specialties.



Betty Canielson, of Aurora, is offered a sandwich by Julija Boboba, working for Sullivan's Steakhouse Sunday at the Soup's On! fundraiser for the Rotary club, held at Tellabs.

(Tyler Stoffel / Special to The Sun)

BY THE NUMBERS

4,600

Approximate number of Naperville residents living below the federal poverty level.

8

The average age of a homeless person in DuPage County.

30 percent

Segment of the 45,000 DuPage County residents living in poverty who are under age 5.

31 percent

Increase in the number of families served by the homelessness prevention agency DuPage PADS between 2001 and 2008.

10,502

Households in DuPage County that received emergency assistance (housing, food, clothing, prescriptions or transportation) in fiscal 2007.

1.2 million

Pounds of groceries distributed to Naperville residents by Loaves & Fishes Community Pantry in fiscal 2008.

Sources: *Bridge Communities, DuPage PADS, Loaves & Fishes*

By all accounts the benefit was a success. More than 800 adult tickets and 150 kids' tickets were sold in advance of the day, the Garloughs said, and about 100 walk-in patrons arrived within the first 30 minutes after the doors opened.

"What I love about it is that people are helping their neighbors," Bill Garlough said.

Karen Garlough said that thanks largely to more than 40 local sponsors - which included Tellabs, The Sun and Sun news partner The Beacon-News - the event was in the black even before its doors opened Sunday. The goal was to generate net proceeds of \$75,000, to be distributed equally among Loaves & Fishes Community Pantry in Naperville, Heses House Inc. in Aurora and DuPage PADS (Public Action to Deliver Shelter) in Wheaton.

The need at each of the charitable entities has been growing steadily, and no letup is in sight.

"It seems to be more difficult," said Lisa Hedberg, volunteer coordinator for Loaves & Fishes.

The agency feeds Naperville residents who aren't able to put food on the table without some help, but increasingly it is providing emergency relief to residents of Aurora, Downers Grove and surrounding communities as well, Hedberg said.

Heses House also continues to receive more people than it is designed to serve. According to Executive Director Ryan Dowd, the relief agency's emergency shelter typically has 60 or 70 more visitors needing a place to sleep than it has beds, leaving dozens to spend the night in chairs. Another 82 people are served in transitional dormitory-style settings and permanent supportive housing, which is a maximum capacity for those programs, Dowd said.

Although the collection of social services under the Heses House umbrella does a good job of helping clients get their lives turned around, Dowd said, the case load remains high, averaging 16 new faces every week.

"Our goal is to get 17 people out every week. We're not there yet," he said. "We're getting people in faster than we're able to get them out. Before the economy turned, we were doing OK, but now we're really struggling to keep up."

With homelessness and job loss on the rise, the soup-kitchen philosophy is both familiar and contemporary. To a certain extent, that supports the task of finding support for relief efforts. Both Garloughs marveled at the generosity of the business community, many members of which gave labor and materials to help ensure the success of Soup's On!

"People understand it," Karen Garlough said. "You don't need to hit them over the head with it."

Batavia resident Matt Weber, visiting the event with sons Parker, 10, and Trent, 7, understands. As the owner of Clark's Car Care in Naperville, Weber sponsors a food and household supplies drive, collecting nonperishables for people and their pets, at holiday time every year. He also sees to the maintenance needs of the Loaves & Fishes van at no charge. Parker, a Boy Scout, has helped his dad clean up the vehicle.

"We do whatever we can," Weber said.

THE COOKS

These restaurants participated in Sunday's fundraiser for local residents in need, hosted by The Rotary Club of Naperville:

Arbor Vitae Café	Heritage Wine Cellars	Quigley's Irish Pub
Buffalo Wild winds	Holiday Inn Select – Naperville	Raffi's on 5 th
Capri Ristorante Italiano	Jimmy's Grill	Rock Bottom Brewery
Catch 35	KeyWester	Sullivan's Steakhouse
Chef Amaury's Epicurean Affair	Le Chocolat of Naperville	Texas Roadhouse
City Club	Maggiano's Naperville	Whispering Springs Water
Cold Stone Creamery, downtown Naperville	Meson Sabika	Whole Foods Market
Costco	My Chef Catering	Wisconsin Milk Marketing Board
	Panera Bread Company	Zaidi's Restaurant