

Empty Bowls Headwaters brings local restaurants and caterers together to support local food programs

By Rob Paul

The Empty Bowls Headwaters event is set for Sunday, October 17, at the Alton Legion and will run from 11:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. as a carry-out event this year.

The event has been run by Ann Randeraad for over a decade after she decided to start her own in the Caledon community to help local food programs.

A grassroots fundraiser that began over 30 years ago when Michigan teacher John Hartom wanted to get his students involved in a food drive, Empty Bowls has blossomed into a global yearly fundraiser for food programs.

The idea is that local potters donate handmade bowls that are then given away for charity to those who participate as a reminder that not everyone has a full bowl every day.

To participate in the event and take home a bowl, tickets can be purchased for \$45 at www.annranderaadpottery.com/store/p2/Empty_Bowls_Headwaters.html?there will also be a non-perishable food drive for people to donate to at the event.

Empty Bowls events have raised tens of millions of dollars since Hartom retired from teaching in 1999 to donate all of his time to the project. Now, schools, organizations, and individuals like Randeraad run Empty Bowls events around the world.

?Although the Empty Bowls organization provides guidance to those wishing to hold a fundraising event, they are primarily hands-off,? said Hartom. «We only ask organizers to use the Empty Bowls name and to distribute money locally.?

Not every Empty Bowls event has a food component, but thanks to the support and donation of local restaurants and caterers, Empty Bowls Headwaters will include an option of a specialty soups for every participant.

This year's soup providers are Absolute Catering in Mono, Gourmandissimo in Caledon East, the Busholme in Erin, the Hatter in Orangeville, Mrs. Mitchell's Restaurant in Mulmur, and Lavender Blue Catering in Orangeville.

Many of the soup providers are returning supports who get involved and continue to stay involved because it's a unique cause and important to the community.

?We have been involved for a few years,? said Perry Meeker of the Hatter. ?Quite simply, it's a great fundraiser with a great cause. We are proud to participate.?

With the last 18 months being defined by COVID-19, many of the restaurants and caterers have felt the impact of the pandemic and know how hard it has hit families in need.

?We have participated in this fundraiser for three years now and realize, especially now, how important it is to look after people and give back,? said Beth Vincer of Absolute Catering. ?No one should ever go hungry.?

Knowing how much support they've received from the tight knit community, the soup providers don't have to think twice when asked if they'd like to help support a good cause, especially because Empty Bowls Headwaters localizes the donation process.

?Pretty easy choice,? said Mike Magill of the Busholme. ?Bridget stopped in and asked if we could participate, we said no problem.

The community support here at the Busholme has been amazing. Our chefs like making soups. We like to be involved in as many community fundraisers as possible.?

Given the work Empty Bowls does for food programs across the world in its one-of-a-kind way of fundraising, it's an exceptionally strong reminder to those donating soup that there are people out there who rely on these types of efforts.

?We have been supporting Empty Bowls for as long as we can remember,? said Adriana Roche of Gourmandissimo. ?It saddens me to think that there are people who may not have enough on their plates when we are blessed with an abundance of healthy food.

?If our collective fundraising efforts brings funds and awareness to those in need then we will continue to support Empty Bowls for as long as we can. I also own about 12 of the beautiful bowls myself from previous years. I always look forward to adding a new piece to our family collection.?