

# Third Helping

As Published in the Naperville Sun Sunday, October 24<sup>th</sup>, 2010

No one went home hungry from the Naperville Rotary's third annual fundraiser for local poverty relief. Fewer DuPage County residents will go hungry as a result.

The Oct. 17 Soup's On event at the Tellabs campus on Diehl Road drew its strongest support so far. Once the numbers are all in, organizers expect the proceeds to come to around \$110,000, an increase of more than 18 percent over last year's total. That sum represented a 31 percent improvement over the inaugural event's net proceeds of \$71,000 in 2008.

Bill Garlough, who with his wife Karen dreamed up the benefit concept, is pleased to watch the effort gain momentum each time.

"I'm of the opinion about first impressions (that) you have to do it well. I think people enjoyed it, and we heard comments like, 'I can't wait to come next year.' It's gaining traction, and people are just really behind it," he said Thursday. "People see it, they appreciate it and they want to come back for more."

Roughly 1,900 patrons came through the sprawling Tellabs atrium over this year's 5 1/2-hour event, sampling foods donated by 30 area restaurants and beverage purveyors. Offerings included miniature sandwiches, imported cheeses, baked goods, pasta — and a wide variety of soups. For \$35 paid in advance (and \$10 for kids), visitors were able to eat their fill.



**Executive chef Ed Kropiwipc (left) and chef Salvador Martinez from Alden Gardens of Waterford in Aurora prepare servings of bourbon glazed ribs and cornbread on Oct. 17 during the Soup's On fundraiser.**

"I think the joy of it is that there is as much as you want," Garlough said. "It's really a top-notch dining experience."

The three organizations that share the funds generated at the event plan to put the money to good use.

"It's enormously helpful, particularly in these uncertain economic times," said Ryan Dowd, executive director of Hesed House Inc. The agency provides emergency shelter, groceries and prepared meals and houses between 200 and 250 people every night at its Aurora facility.

"We get 16 new homeless individuals in here every single week, which means we have to get 16 people out every week," Dowd said. "When we can do that, it's a good day."

Hesed House has seen larger numbers of new clients since the economy turned sour, and in the past year has been focusing more resources on helping people get back on their feet, he said. The Rotary donation is especially valuable, Dowd said, because prevention services cost more than basic food and shelter — but there is greater value in keeping families in their homes.

The belief that individual power is better than simple provision also drives new initiatives at Loaves & Fishes Community Pantry in Naperville, another of the event's beneficiaries.

“What we’ve discovered is you can’t end hunger simply by giving food out. You have to get at the root causes of hunger,” Executive Director Charles McLimans said, outlining some of the collaborative efforts the hunger-relief organization has undertaken as work moves ahead on its new headquarters on High Grove Lane. A February move-in is anticipated, McLimans said.

Loaves & Fishes has seen its client load soar in the past several years, and the last three months have brought an increased wave of additional need. Between July 1 and Sept. 30, 423 new families came in for help, a volume level the pantry hadn’t seen for about two years — which was when Soup’s On first began backing the cause.

“It was, I think, very visionary of the club to choose the high-needs agencies in the area,” McLimans said. “The economy was beginning to tank in August of 2008, and that’s when our numbers began to spike.”

New services intended to help at-risk households include nutritional education, financial literacy and health screening, among others.

“There’s many reasons why people can’t put food on the table,” McLimans said. “These are all pathways to empowerment.”

At DuPage Public Action to Deliver Shelter, the third charity supported by the fundraiser, the client load went up 43 percent last year. Based in Wheaton, PADS works to prevent homelessness, in addition to providing an array of services that include employment help, education, life skills and temporary shelter.

Carol Simler, executive director of DuPage PADS, said they’re “overjoyed” by the generosity of the community and Rotary. “It will help us meet the needs of so many people in our community who now not only are hungry, but find themselves without a place to call home, that are homeless,” she said.

The funds will assist the agency in providing necessary support services that enable people to move back into their communities, such as transportation assistance and help with paying for prescription medications. “There’s never enough funding for that,” Simler said.

Garlough said the people who support Soup’s On appear to be glad to know where the money goes.

“Everybody is behind the idea of helping the local food pantry and shelters,” he said. “That’s a very positive thing.”

McLimans sees that, too. He is gratified by the response to the persistent need.

“I think our community, being the great, giving community that it is, wants to make sure that a family has a home and a place to sleep at night, and food on the table,” he said. “It’s just the highest priority.”