

## 2,000 turn out for Soup's On fundraiser

By Hilary Decent For The Sun October 17, 2011 1:16PM



The fourth annual Soup's On fundraiser is on target to be the most successful yet. About 2,000 people attended the Naperville Rotary Club event Sunday at Tellabs on Diehl Road. The service club's target was to raise more than \$120,000 for the hungry and homeless.

The event replaces Oktoberfest as Rotary's main fundraiser of the year. Since it began, more than \$250,000 has been raised for Loaves and Fishes Community Pantry, DuPage PADS and Hesed House.

Event founder and My Chef caterer Bill Garlough said the event was going "wonderfully."

"I'm very pleased that the community continues to embrace this fundraiser," he said. "It shows our Rotary Club runs a good and efficient event."

He said more than 90 percent of the funds raised goes to the charities.

"We're so grateful to the city of Naperville for increasing their SECA grant to us this year," he said. "I think they recognize this is a very family-friendly, nice Sunday afternoon event for a great cause."

He said 30 local restaurants donated food this year.

Garlough's wife Karen said the event appealed to different people on many levels.

"You can leave your children playing in the DuPage Museum family area, enjoy great food, watch the football on large screen TVs and listen to entertainment from students from District 203 and 204," she said. "It promotes community."

## **Need is great**

The recipients of the funds raised also were thrilled with the event.

“The money is so important particularly right now when the need is greater than ever,” said Ryan Dowd, executive director of Hesed House in Aurora. “Any time you can help charity thematically is great. To offer food to people to help raise money to feed the hungry allows them to make a real connection.”

For Loaves and Fishes, the money could not come at a better time. They use it to provide Thanksgiving and Christmas meals to 2,000 families.

“The whole community has come out to take action in a fun and helpful way,” said Charles McLimans, Loaves and Fishes executive director.

Carol Simler, executive director of DuPage PADS, agreed.

“Today’s event is an extraordinary outpouring of the community to say ‘yes, we want to support the fact that people should not be hungry or without a home.’”

## **Participation key**

This year’s Soup’s On co-chair and co-sponsorship chair Frank Slocumb said reasons for this year’s success included the high retention rate of participating restaurants, the organizational work done by My Chef and the brand promotion done by John Norman of Design Resource Center.

“Last year, we were able to distribute \$105,000 to the beneficiaries,” he said. “This year, we are hoping it will be at least \$120,000.”

“When Rotary is involved it’s like putting the Good Housekeeping seal of approval on an event.”

Fred Spitzzeri said his goal as chair of the silent auction committee was to raise \$15,000. This year there were 115 gift baskets offered, plus sports memorabilia and a 55-inch TV from Grants Appliances.

## **Lots to do**

This year’s Naperville Rotary Club President Sun Kwok called it one of the most fun family-oriented events in town.

“Everyone is having a great time, and I am really pleased to be part of it,” he said.

All five Naperville high schools provided entertainment.

“Not only does it give the community a chance to see how talented our students are, the students also get a real kick out of it,” Jason Altenbern of District 204 said.

Cathy Bouchard of Le Chocolate du Bouchard in downtown Naperville has arguably drawn the longest lines every year.



“This event is such fun,” she said. “We bake on site for two days before, providing thousands of cupcakes on fall or Halloween themes.”

As a Rotarian, Jimmy Bergeron of Jimmy’s Grill in Naperville says the event is dear to his heart.

“It’s a great event for local good causes,” he said.

### **Get involved**

Diane Voycek of Aurora attends Soup’s On every year.

“It’s wonderful,” she said. “We come here to see old friends, enjoy good music and good food. It gets better and better.”

Carolynn Carlson of Naperville was there for the first time.

“I think it’s fantastic,” she said.

Karren Wcisel of Naperville was impressed with the organization, while Elizabeth Lynch and Justin Wiestlund said they made a special trip from Chicago.

May Yurgaitis of Naperville Township explained Loaves and Fishes was one of the charities the township supports.

“I also enjoy the great restaurants represented here,” she said.

As a Rotarian, Soup’s On is particularly special for Naperville Mayor A. George Pradel.

“This is one of the best fundraisers we have because it focuses on helping people who don’t have homes or food,” he said. “People wonder what they can do to help. Supporting Soup’s On is a really easy way to get involved.”