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Food pantry combats hunger 1 empty bowl at a time

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• *Homer community is "hungry to help"*

By Nichole Smith

Homer Tribune

For three years, Homer Community Food Pantry has combined the love of good soup with an appreciation of handmade pottery to produce the perfect recipe for fundraising success.

This year's "Empty Bowls Soup Luncheon" served the community soup, bread and desserts on Friday to raise funds for the Homer Pantry.

Proceeds from the luncheon go back to the community in the form of purchased can goods and basic staples, as well as fresh fruits and vegetables given out to those in need every week.

Aside from paying utilities, providing gas to purchase goods and groceries and make food deliveries, the food pantry relies on volunteers to help get food in the hands of those who need it.

Through in-kind donations from local grocery stores, soup donations from 18 restaurants and a number of volunteer dessert-bakers, the food pantry was able to continue their fundraising tradition this year.

And the local food pantry reaches further than just Homer, as the organization helps feed kids in the school district, in villages across the Bay and helps support the Anchor Point Food Pantry.

Money raised from Friday's event will continue to help local schools, villages and people who come to the food pantry in search of assistance.

For \$10, diners could purchase a bowl of soup and a variety of breads and desserts. Soup — along with a handmade bowl to keep — was \$30 each.

This year's Empty Bowls program sold all 175 handmade bowls available. Only 90 minutes into the fundraiser, less than two dozen bowls remained on the tables. An exact count of tickets sold is unknown, but the effort brought in \$7,023 soup bowl donations.

The opportunity to have a one-of-a-kind handmade bowl from local artisans, as well as offerings from Homer High School and Kenai Peninsula College pottery students is a large draw for the luncheon.

More so, however, is the opportunity to support the community and give back in the form of funds collected for the Homer Community Food Pantry.

Donations can be dropped off at the Homer Food Pantry on Mondays, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. This is also a good time for those wanting to volunteer at the food pantry to come.

Anyone in need of emergency food assistance or with questions is urged to call 235-1698.

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