

Empty/Full

Hunger-relief fundraiser joins First Friday Art Walk festivities

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By Sarah Lemon

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Specializing in fine-art vases and jars, Ashland potter Hannah Brehmer pours some effort each year into the humble bowl.

Bowls hand-crafted by Brehmer and other local ceramic artists go on sale next week to benefit Jackson County food pantries. Hundreds of pottery pieces — most priced at \$10 — are the main attraction at Soroptimist International of Ashland's 11th annual Empty Bowls Project, which coincides with the town's First Friday Art Walk for April.

Donated by the nonprofit artists' group Clayfolk, Southern Oregon University students and Ashland's John Muir School, the ceramics collection goes on display Monday, March 29, at Southern Oregon University's Thorndike Gallery. A pottery-throwing demonstration and live music at SOU's Art Building highlight the April 2 festivities.

Based on similar events nationwide, Soroptimists' version has raised about \$35,000 over the past decade for ACCESS Inc., the county's emergency food bank, and other local organizations.

Funds also benefit Ashland Emergency Food Bank, Uncle Food's Diner and Food Angels. In addition to art, event-goers can purchase coupons good for bowls of soup or other dishes at participating restaurants.

"If we could raise another \$5,000 this year, I'd be real happy," says organizer Sue Kurth.

Every dollar donated buys about 5 pounds of food for ACCESS, says nutrition programs manager Philip Yates. It costs approximately \$5 — the price of an Empty Bowls soup coupon — to fill one of the agency's emergency food boxes with enough groceries to feed one person for about a week, Yates says. ACCESS supplied about 7,000 local families with more than 36,400 such boxes last year, he says.

Empty Bowls is one of many local endeavors that raise about \$300,000 annually for ACCESS and keep hunger in the community's consciousness, Yates says. After a 17-percent spike in demand for food boxes between July 2008 and January 2009, ACCESS saw just a 9-percent increase during the same period for 2009-10, he adds. But Yates says he believes the newly unemployed don't know how to find the county's food pantries.

Passing along Empty Bowls soup coupons to the needy is one way to help, says Brehmer. Participating restaurants are Avalon Bar & Grill, Breadboard, Brother's, Dragonfly, Geppetto's, Greenleaf, Grilla Bites, Standing Stone Brewing Co. and Wild Goose Cafe & Bar.

Or fill your bowl with one of these hearty soups.

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IF YOU GO

What: Empty Bowls project, a ceramics sale and fundraiser by Soroptimist International of Ashland to benefit local hunger-relief organizations.

When: 5 to 7 p.m. Friday,

April 2; ceramic pieces go on display Monday, March 29.

Where: Southern Oregon University's Thorndike Gallery, corner of Siskiyou Boulevard and Indiana Street, Ashland (next to the Schneider Museum of Art).

For more information: Call the Schneider Museum at 552-6245 or visit the Web site www.soroptimistrv.org.



Brother's Restaurant Delicatessen donated coupons for bowls of its soup to be hunger-relief fundraiser Empty Bowls. Shown in Hannah Brehmer's handmade bowl is the restaurant's chicken and rice, white bean and pesto and potato with roasted garlic soups.

Bob Pennell



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