

Help Us Fill the *Empty Bowls* in Our Community!

By Erin Mitchell

On October 14 at Weaver Street Market in Carrboro, TABLE will continue its tradition of bringing the community together for TABLE's 6th Annual Empty Bowls fundraiser.

Attendees who purchase a ticket are able to choose their favorite hand-crafted bowl, donated by generous and talented local artisans, and enjoy hearty soups, sandwiches, and sweet creations from local chefs, while listening to live bluegrass music from hometown musicians. The event will be brimming with food, fun, and friends, all to help relieve child hunger in our community.

Chef Baptist Knaven and owner of Provence, a French restaurant located in the heart of downtown Carrboro, will host our V.I.P. reception featuring complimentary wine and savory appetizers. VIP attendees will also be given an exclusive opportunity to choose their hand-crafted bowl prior to the event.

"Being able to contribute to Empty Bowls from the very beginning has been a truly rewarding experience," says Knaven. "I love seeing how food brings so many people from the community together to have fun and give to such an important cause."

Last year, Empty Bowls helped raise funds for TABLE to deliver over 10,000 meals to children in Chapel Hill-Carrboro who rely on subsidized lunches at school but experience hunger on the weekends and holidays. Thanks to our team of dedicated volunteers, generous donors and wonderful sponsors, TABLE is able to bring our community together again with the hope this year will be even bigger than ever with a projected 550 attendees!

Empty Bowls' Beginnings

TABLE held its first annual Empty Bowls fundraiser at the original TABLE location on West Weaver Street which attracted over 150 attendees. From its inception, Empty Bowls has served not only as a means to raise awareness and funds to fight childhood hunger but also as a way for donors to have fun in a warm, open and no-pressure atmosphere.

The event began with longtime TABLE supporter and volunteer Director of Operations Randee Hartzell, who first discovered the concept for the "empty bowls" fundraiser on a flyer while at a restaurant in the mountains of North Carolina. TABLE was in need of a signature event to bring the community together around the concept of giving back, and Empty Bowls seemed to be the perfect fit. It was a huge undertaking for a fairly new grassroots operation manned by volunteers and the small TABLE team, but, passionate and determined, they made an ambitious idea a reality, and made the event what it is today.

“It started with only three or four people in the community, making it up as we went along,” Randee reflected. “I wrote personal letters to local potters, teachers, and people in the community. Ashton Tippins, now Executive Director for TABLE, and I talked to Baptist at Provence, and he got really excited about the event. My husband is in a band, so we recruited him to play. Everyone just got on board and we had such a great response.”

Randee’s favorite thing about the Empty Bowls fundraiser is that it is a highly visible event, and that new TABLE supporters and longtime donors alike can come together to learn about TABLE in a fun, friendly environment at an affordable cost. It is an event for anyone and everyone.

“It’s just fun,” Ms. Hartzell said. “You’re supporting local kids. There are still a lot of people who don’t realize that there are hungry kids in our area. This event helps to make people more aware of that and give back while having fun.”

Looking Forward

Within a few short years, Empty Bowls outgrew its’ original location and found a new home on the tree-lined lawn of Weaver Street Market. It’s a perfect place for friends and families to relax and enjoy all of the wonderful food from our charitable restaurant partners.

“We love the Empty Bowls event because it showcases the strength of this community; so many people come together to support this cause, and Weaver Street Market is honored to provide a place for them to do so,” Linda Fullwood, WSM Events Coordinator, remarked. “We love seeing the crowd grow over the years because we know that more Empty Bowls attendees means fewer kids who will go hungry on the weekends and holidays.”

From 150 guests in the beginning to over 500 this year, the Empty Bowls fundraiser has grown, changed locations, introduced new chefs, potters and bands. But some things haven’t changed. The goal at the heart of this event, to feed hungry kids and raise awareness about childhood hunger and the conviction that we live in an extremely compassionate, giving community. Empty Bowls is an event for the community, benefiting members of the community, made possible by the community.

We hope to see you at this year’s Empty Bowls! You can purchase tickets [here](#).