



COMMUNITY
Food WAREHOUSE

OF MERCER COUNTY

Mercer County First Annual Empty Bowls Project

Empty Bowls is an international grassroots effort to fight hunger and was created by The Imagine Render Group that raises awareness about the issues of hunger and food insecurity and also raises funds to help combat hunger here in our local communities. The event centers around a simple meal of soup served in crafted pottery bowls, made and donated by local high school and college art departments and local artisans. For a determined price, participants can choose their bowl and type of soup to either eat at the designated location or take home. The meal is simple: soup and bread, to make folks aware that there are those who don't often have enough to eat; and the ceramic decorated bowl is a reminder of their choice to help those in need. All money collected goes to feeding the hungry.

CFW learned about the *Empty Bowls Project* about 5 years ago. At the time, we were a small staff of 3 full time employees, and we knew we could not manage the project alone, yet we knew the event would be important because of its strong, yet simplistic hunger awareness message. We learned what we could about it and then put it on the back burner. But as wonderful things have a way of happening at CFW, we were blessed to have a volunteer walk into our lives who took the idea and not only put it onto the front burner, but turned up the heat! Here's our little story:

Anna Houlihan came to us wanting to volunteer and became a great help to us in the office with her computer skills. During an office chat one day she mentioned that she was a potter and her small group of potter friends/family were called the "Meno-pots". That comment brought the ensuing discussion of the *Empty Bowls Project*. Anna took an immediate interest and spread the word to her group and the ball (or should we say the "clay"!) started rolling.

The *Empty Bowls Project* had been in the planning for about a year prior to the initial event. Christian Kuharik, MFA, the head of Ceramics at Penn State Shenango, joined the team and these artisans put their creative minds to work to make this event a masterpiece! Also joining the team helping with logistics was our Penn State intern, Michelle Miller. Our resident artist at the time, Betty DiGiorgio, was on hand also to help judge the student juried art show, and volunteer, Gwen Martino lent her creativity and organizational skills to the committee.

The Empty Bowls hunger awareness and fundraising event was held at CFW on Wednesday, May 18, 2011. Ticket price included a choice of 4 different soups made by local restaurants, bread, and a handmade ceramic bowl made by local artists and high school/college art students. Folks had the choice to eat in or take out. A Chinese auction boasted over 100

beautiful items donated by many generous supporters. Local middle and elementary school students created hunger themed posters that adorned the hallway walls for all to enjoy. The juried student art show afforded local art students the opportunity to enter their favorite piece of art work for judging. Local artists were invited to display and sell their artwork in the *Artist Marketplace*. Tours of the new food bank facility were available to any and all. The Mercer County Inaugural Empty Bowls Event was a huge success. Over 500 people attended...tickets were sold out! It was a great family evening out.

We hope you will join us next year! If you are interested in helping, would like to be a sponsor or soup donor, or would like to be recruited to help make bowls, please contact us.