

Empty Bowls goes beyond the soup with more ways to support Welcoming Arms, Inn from the Cold

While tickets are selling fast for the 14th annual Empty Bowls event, hosted by Aurora's Pine Tree Potters Guild, there are more opportunities now than ever before to support the Guild's long-time community partners ? Welcoming Arms and Inn from the Cold.

This year's event will take place Thursday, November 16, at Newmarket's Old Town Hall.

Over the last 12 months, Guild members have been hard at work making more than 500 unique ceramic bowls which are at the heart of the event. Ticket holders are able to select the bowl of their choice and have it filled with delicious soups offered by chefs from nearly two dozen York Region restaurants.

The purpose of the event is both simple and twofold ? to remind people that not everyone has a full bowl every day, and to support two community organizations dedicated to making sure that each week, for those in need, as many empty bowls are filled as possible.

As The Auroran went to press this week, only limited tickets were available for the dinner seating from 6.30 ? 8.30 p.m., but new this year there's a chance to still get a bowl, with all revenues supporting the mission.

?Empty Bowls has been a part of our community and the flagship event of our Guild going on now for 14 years. We can see the impact that it makes and it is close to home,? says event chair Lisa-Marie Oliphant. ?It has been very rewarding to do this work, to work all year, making 500-plus bowls, knowing that each one of those bowls is going to find its way into someone's hands who is going to donate money and be a part of the spirit and gain awareness of the plight of what is happening in our own community and how small acts of kindness and focus around such community involvement can make a difference. That is why it endures.

?We have quite a wide range of effort and skill that goes into creating the bowls. No matter what, even if you aren't making a bowl, you're a part of preparing the glazes, part of getting the tickets sold, part of creating the volunteers' list for coordinating the 20 restaurants that are going to be a part of our event or coordinating volunteers who will do everything from lifting the equipment, setting up the table cloths, creating the flower arrangements. It's not just about the bowl making, it's about everything that goes into creating such a flagship event in the beautiful space that is Old Town Hall.?

Each year, Empty Bowls invites new and returning chefs to be a part of the event, underscoring not only the chance to showcase their signature soup but how each ladle is critical to both Welcoming Arms and Inn from the Cold.

?Empty bowls is impactful in two very important ways,? says Ann Watson, Executive Director of Inn from the Cold. ?Firstly, it provides much needed funds which we apply to our food programs. IFTC serves 1,135 meals a week to some of our community's most vulnerable residents. Empty Bowls helps tremendously to offset the steep increase in food prices that we have seen over the past several years. And secondly, Empty Bowls brings together the community to support both Inn From the Cold and Welcoming Arms. Both Inn From the Cold and Welcoming Arms are deeply imbedded in the community and this event highlights the great things that happen when we come together in support of local not-for-profits, while enjoying a beautiful, elegant event with delicious soups!?

Any remaining tickets are on sale now from the Aurora branch of Meridian Credit Union at Wellington Street East at Mary Street, but if you're too late, your purchase of a bowl, even if it's without the soup, will still allow you to bring home a piece of art and benefit the organization.

?100 per cent of the money spent on that bowl, which is also tax free, will go directly to Inn from the Cold and Welcoming Arms, so we'll have our bowls room open at Old Town Hall on Friday, November 17, from 1 - 9 p.m., Saturday, November 18, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Sunday, November 19, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., with special signage to direct people to purchase bowls for the charity

fundraiser.

?What goes through my mind and with everyone in the Guild each year is making a difference. Their one small bowl makes a difference. The lifecycle of that bowl is going to be filled with a local restaurant's soup, which helps them. It helps awareness of the restaurants there, supporting local business. When it comes to Welcoming Arms and Inn From the Cold, we are spreading not only dollars their way but spreading awareness of the reality of their struggles and the credibility for what they do for our local communities. This isn't a Downtown Toronto problem; there is homelessness, families in need, families in crisis in Newmarket, in Aurora, in York Region. They need our help and we can't forget them.?

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