

Empty Bowl event Saturday benefits Bastrop County food pantry



*ABOVE: Bastrop High School senior Jackson Wettstein paints a likeness of Vincent Van Gogh's *The Starry Night* on a bowl that will be up for grabs at the 15th annual Empty Bowl Project on Saturday. [TERRY HAGERTY/ FOR BASTROP ADVERTISER PHOTS]*



Tresha Silva, executive director of Bastrop County Emergency Food Pantry, holds two painted bowls that will be up for grabs at the 15th annual Empty Bowl Project on Saturday.

BY TERRY HAGERTY
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As the 15th annual Empty Bowl Project nears, Bastrop students say they are excited about having painted bowls and sparking a sense of community among classmates for the event that raises funds for the Bastrop County Emergency Food Pantry.

Food pantry Executive Director Tresha Silva said the students painted about 700 of the 1,000 bowls that will be up for grabs at display tables at the Empty Bowl Project as attendees enter the Bastrop Convention Center. Silva said community members have painted additional bowls at several paint parties and at businesses.

Area restaurants and caterers will be serving up delicious soups, stews and chili for every taste – from country style to Cajun to vegetarian, and from old favorites to great new twists – as part of the fundraiser.

The Empty Bowl Project is a “crucial part of the food pantry’s annual fundraising efforts,” and students play a major role with helping paint the bowls, Silva said.

“The kids come up with some amazing bowls,” she said “You can tell there’s been a conversation (about the Empty Bowl Project) because some of the bowls will have a theme about community and caring.”

She said some bowls in the past have been painted with words such as “hope” and “grateful.” Silva said the pantry provides all materials and supplies to schools, including the unpainted clay bowls on which students work.

At Emile Elementary, fourth-grade students in art teacher Kim Deviney’s class displayed their skills in painting 60 bowls. Each student painted two bowls or more.

Kristopher Castro, 10, said the experience was a fun one. “I can be creative and we’re giving these bowls so people can buy them and help the food pantry,” he said.

Deviney said students also learned “that part of their responsibility as an artist is that you should always give back to the community. They are using their skills in art to benefit the Bastrop community.”

At Bastrop High School, students in teacher Patty Green’s class also helped paint bowls. Senior Jackson Wettstein was skillfully decorating a bowl with a version of Vincent van Gogh’s famous oil-on-canvas, “The Starry Night.”

“It takes a long time to paint this (right), but the outcome makes it worth it,” Wettstein said.

Last year, the pantry distributed 333,080 pounds of food to almost 12,000 households, helping more than 20,000 individuals, Silva said. It also provided an array of education and support services to elderly people and those in need.

The Empty Bowl Project runs Saturday from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at the Bastrop Convention Center, 1408 Chestnut St. Tickets are \$20 per person; children 12 and under,

eat for free. Tickets may be purchased at the door.