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Local celebrities to paint bowls for fundraiser

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Local celebrities will contribute their painting skills next week to a fundraiser for food pantries.

Roughly a month before the sixth annual Empty Bowls event, well-known local people, including Western Kentucky University President Timothy Caboni, WKU Athletic Director Todd Stewart and Bowling Green Independent School District Superintendent Gary Fields, will paint bowls that will be auctioned for the fundraiser.

The Celebrity Bowl Event will be at 11 a.m. Tuesday at St. James United Methodist Church, according to Gary Taylor, a church member credited with bringing the idea of Empty Bowls with him when he moved to Bowling Green from New Hampshire.

This is the second time Empty Bowls has included the preliminary Celebrity Bowl Event, which Taylor said draws more attention to the fundraiser.

The bowls that local celebrities paint, after being fired in Paint'n Place's kiln, will be auctioned at Empty Bowls on March 8 at Sloan Convention Center.

Taylor said Empty Bowls events are held throughout the country. At the event in March, attendees will choose one bowl out of more than 1,000 provided by local volunteers, eat a simple meal of bread and soup and take the bowl home with them.

Since the first Empty Bowls event in Bowling Green six years ago, the fundraiser has grown with each installment, Taylor said.

"The pottery itself is a beautiful thing and people like to come to the event and see the literally hundreds of bowls that are there," he said.

Chris Patterson, minister of St. James United Methodist Church, said the event draws large crowds year after year because hunger is a universally understood problem people want to help alleviate.

“These are real people with real lives that we interact with every day,” he said of those who regularly deal with hunger.

In March, Empty Bowls attendees will pay \$10 at the door, with all proceeds going to HOTEL INC’s Mana Mart and University Street Church of Christ’s Life Care Ministry, two Bowling Green-based food banks.

“When they are done eating, they’ll go back to wherever they’re from knowing that 100 percent of that \$10 will go back to this community,” he said.

Patterson said the Celebrity Bowl Event isn’t intended to be a large spectacle, but the public is welcome.

Fields will be painting his second bowl to be auctioned.



Fields, who described himself as lacking artistic ability, said he remembered feeling intimidated when he gathered last year with other local celebrities to paint a theme on his bowl in purple and gold, his district’s colors.

“We had local artists in there, and I was trying to make something look halfway decent,” he said.

As a superintendent, child hunger weighs heavily on Fields’ mind, and he’s glad Empty Bowls helps combat and raise awareness of hunger in the area, he said.

Recently, Fields called off school in his district due to weather concerns more than once, which is always a difficult decision because closing school prevents students struggling with hunger from receiving the breakfast and lunch the schools provide, he said.

“Those kinds of things stick in my head when I make those decisions,” he said.

Fields said he was happy to contribute to Empty Bowls once again.

“Empty Bowls is trying to make a difference by raising money but more importantly, they’re raising awareness,” he said.

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