

What is The Empty Bowls Dinner?

For those of you who are somewhat new to CDA, here is an explanation of the Empty Bowls Tradition...

Eighteen years ago in 1990, a high school teacher in Michigan, with his students, searched for a way to raise funds to support a local food drive. This class project evolved into an International concept to feed the hungry called "The Empty Bowls Project". The concept has been used for fundraisers around the world and has raised millions of dollars for various hunger relief programs.

Five years later, a CDA member learned of the idea and we held our first Empty Bowls Dinner in Virginia Beach at the Church of the Holy Family with soups donated by area restaurants. Approximately 200 tickets were sold. The event quickly outgrew the venue and as of 1999 has been held at Virginia Wesleyan College.

The basic idea is that the guests are served a simple meal of soup and bread. The simplicity of the theme for the dinner, the bowls, emphasizes the message of the event which is that around the world and around the corner, there are bowls that go empty. Taking a bowl home is a reminder that we can all do something to reduce hunger.

The first stop for dinner guests at the CDA/Virginia Wesleyan Empty Bowls Dinner is the bowl room. The room holds dozens of tables topped by hundreds of bowls. It's an exciting sight no matter how many times one sees it. At 6:30 the first group is let into the bowl room. Some have been waiting in line for an hour or more to get first choice, but they needn't worry since the bowls are replenished throughout the evening. The choosing of the bowls is a little like polite chaos – but really fun. It's a treasure hunt with people clutching a bowl, trading for another then putting it down and picking one up that they like better and so forth until they make their final choice.

We usually come up with over 900 bowls from which to choose. After the bowl selection and on the way to dinner, guests can view a throwing demonstration and make their first bids in the silent art auction largely composed of works from our group. Second to ticket sales, a significant portion of the funds raised comes from the auction.

After going through the soup line for soup, bread, and a cookie; the diners then proceed to the Boyd dining room which has been festooned with floral arrangements. There is live musical entertainment throughout the dinner. Towards the end of the evening, the bowls not chosen from the bowl room go on sale for a reduced price. At about the same time, the silent auction comes to a climactic close with a few bidding wars.

We focus 100% on filling local needs. Over the years we have raised over \$100,000.00 all of it going to support local charities. These are: The Union Mission, The Judeo-Christian Outreach Center, The Help and Emergency Outreach Shelter, The Oasis Social Ministries, and The Food Bank of South Eastern Virginia. Dinner guests are encouraged to bring canned goods to the dinner. These are collected by the food bank.

.....Bowls from CDA, an elegant venue from Virginia Wesleyan, soup from Sodexo Campus Services, bread from The Real Bread Shop, flowers from the The Virginia Beach Garden Club, volunteers from all, avid dinner guests, and an idea from a high school teacher and his students all come together for a magical evening in our version of an Empty Bowls Dinner.

For more information you can visit: www.emptybowls.net