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‘Tasty’ fundraiser to benefit Chippewa Valley students

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CLINTON TOWNSHIP/MACOMB TOWNSHIP — Delicious food, live entertainment and great auction prizes, all in the name of giving kids a better education — what’s not to love?

Chippewa Valley Schools is hosting its fourth annual Taste Fest and Silent Auction, also known as A Taste for Education, March 27. The popular event serves as the largest fundraiser of the year for the Chippewa Valley Educational Foundation, generating money to support creative classroom minigrants and larger projects in the areas of scholastic enhancement, technology, the arts and more.

“This is the foundation’s signature event, and we’re hoping to raise at least \$30,000 this year,” said Diane Blain, director of school and community relations for the district. “It helps to fund all the good things that the foundation provides for our students, teachers and classrooms. We truly rely on this event to give us some extra funding throughout the school year.”

A Taste for Education will take place at Zuccaro Banquets & Catering, 46601 Gratiot Ave., in Chesterfield Township. More than 450 people are expected to attend the event, which will run 6-9 p.m. Tickets are \$40 each and can be purchased by calling the foundation offices at (586) 723-2240.

Nearly 20 of Macomb County’s finest restaurants and gourmet markets will provide specialty dishes for the event, including Andiamo, Brann’s, Famous Dave’s, Kristina’s Catering, Max & Erma’s, Nino Salvaggio, P.F. Chang’s, Randazzo’s and Vince & Joe’s. As the host venue, Zuccaro will also serve up some of its own signature foods and beverages.

Individuals and local businesses have donated dozens of items to be auctioned off at this year’s A Taste for Education. These prizes range from golf packages and overnight stays to sports tickets and memorabilia. There will be custom jewelry and artwork, a kickball party with Macomb County Executive Mark Hackel and a private cruise with the Macomb County Sheriff’s Marine Division.

DJs Paul Zarkowski and Dave Bova will be spinning music sure to keep the dancefloor filled, and local speed painter Dave Santia will create three original paintings to be auctioned off at the end of the night. According to Blain, Santia is known for producing remarkable facsimiles of celebrities during the span of a single song — and he does it all upside-down.

“Dave has become pretty well-known in this area because what he does is really amazing,” she said. “He’s one of the highlights for us every year; the crowd always loves him. This whole event is just a great night out for people to enjoy themselves while supporting their local schools.”

Superintendent Ron Roberts agreed.

“Taste Fest is such a fabulous community event,” he said. “It’s nice to be able to have a school activity outside of a typical classroom setting for a change. I really enjoy the fun, relaxed atmosphere and all the great food.”

The Chippewa Valley Educational Foundation is a nonprofit, tax-exempt, 501(c)3 organization whose sole purpose is to raise funds to encourage new and creative programs within Chippewa Valley Schools. All donations and gifts to the foundation are tax-deductible.

Last year, the foundation awarded about two dozen classroom minigrants for items such as iPads and other tablets, electronic readers, musical instruments, family science nights, online learning tools, digital microscopes, recycled sculptures and fabric for students to make pillowcases for cancer patients at a local children’s hospital. It also provided college scholarships to graduating seniors and sponsored a well-known author’s visit to all 12 of the district’s elementary schools.

Blain noted that the foundation's minigrants are crucial for teachers looking to provide "innovative learning tools and hands-on activities" that go above and beyond what is covered in the district's budget. Roberts added that such projects can enhance a course's basic curriculum and bring the material to life for students in a whole new way.

"These minigrants really show our teachers' willingness to expose their students to things that they wouldn't normally be exposed to," the superintendent said. "They encourage a lot of creativity on the part of our teaching staff. People aren't always aware of how much money teachers spend out of their own pocket, so these grants can make a big difference for them in the classroom."

For more information on A Taste for Education, visit www.chippewavalleyschools.org.

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