

Super Chef Showdown a success despite lower turnout

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Guests and volunteers joined the Hope House of Union County at First United Methodist Church to celebrate

the Ninth Annual Super Chef Showdown on Saturday, March 14.

Attendance was down this year, among both chefs and attendees, likely due to people wanting to avoid public spaces

over the coronavirus, but the event was still a big success.

The Super Chef Showdown is the Hope House's biggest fundraiser of the year, as each year, area leaders and church members become chefs for a day to prepare unique dishes for charity.

One hundred percent of the proceeds from the showdown benefit the Hope House, which is a faith-based organization that "provides assistance with the basic necessities of life to Union County residents, transients and homeless population who are in critical need."

Following an interview process, Hope House's caseworkers can use donated funds to assist clients with lodging, prescriptions, heating assistance, automobile gasoline, medical treatments, transportation, utility bills and more.

That's why the Super Chef Showdown is so important as a source of funding for community needs. Hope House Board Treasurer Evelyn Ueltzen said the showdown is a significant event that usually features around 20 chefs and draws in the community in



The 2020 Super Chef Showdown winners sure had some tasty treats that helped raise money for Hope House Saturday.
Photo by Chad Stack

large numbers.

In years past, the public has come in, paid an admission fee, and gotten to eat of the delicious dishes prepared by the community chefs. This year, it was donations only for people to eat, as they only had 11 chefs, Ueltzen said.

"Usually, we have a line out in the parking lot waiting to come in," Ueltzen said. "Obviously, we don't have that today. We usually have a band, who canceled last night. So, we certainly understand everyone's concerns, but this is our main fundraiser."

Hope House Board members struggled with whether or not to go on with the event, Ueltzen said, though they decided to proceed with the worthy cause for those who were willing to participate – especially since people will likely need the help now more than ever in light of the virus.

The public and three judges went around to each group of chefs for tastings. Each chef table had a jug for the public to vote for their favorite dish, and once the judges had a chance to sample each dish, they came together to discuss the top dishes.

There are two categories in the showdown: People's Choice Award and Chef's Choice. The latter is decided by the judges, who are strictly judging on taste and presentation.

For the taste portion of the competition, Third Place went to the Circle of Love at First United Methodist Church for their chocolate bark; Second Place went to the Blairsville Police Department for their Brunswick Stew; and First Place went to New Union Baptist Church for their Smoked Chipotle Chicken Salad.

"What Hope House does for the people in need is unbelievable," Blairsville Police Chief Michael "Bear" Baxter said. Blairsville PD has had a chef's table with its famous Brunswick Stew

every year of the Super Chef Showdown.

For the People's Choice Award, the teams that raised the most money from guests were the Blairsville Police Department at third; the Circle of Love at second; and Accord Sunday School of First Baptist Church earned First Place for their tasty Jambalaya.

Anyone in need can visit the Hope House to fill out an application to see if they are eligible for assistance.

Hope House is thankful for all of the local businesses, churches and individuals throughout the community who support the cause, allowing the organization to help families and others in need.

"We're going to be meeting the needs now, especially now with this virus," Ueltzen said. "People are going to be coming to us to get help with their rent and bills, with some parents being out of work, but with doing this all year long.

So, this is our main fundraiser in order to fund giving back to the community."

Also during the event, guests were entered into a raffle for various prizes, and they got the chance to participate in a silent auction.

People who attended Saturday said what Hope House does for folks in the community is excellent, and they always enjoy coming to the Super Chef Showdown.

There is no greater organization in this town to donate to, Harvey Clanton said, noting that the amount of people Hope House helps is amazing.

For anyone who was unable to participate in the 2020 Super Chef Showdown event, Ueltzen said the nonprofit is always accepting donations.

"We have a PayPal through our website, which is HopeHouse-UnionCounty.com," Ueltzen said.



Participation was lower this year at the Super Chef Showdown, but many people still showed up to chow down on the delicious offerings.
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the elections already scheduled for that date.

"Given these circumstances, I believe it is necessary and prudent to suspend in-person voting in the Presidential Preference Primary, and the local elections associated with them, and resume in-person voting for those elections as part of the already scheduled May 19 General Primary," Raffensperger said.

The CDC recommends those, including seniors, who are at greater risk from COVID-19 limit their exposure to the virus by keeping space between themselves and others, avoiding crowds, and staying at home during outbreaks in their community.

Dr. Anthony Fauci, the head of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, has likewise identified individuals 65 years old and older as facing increased risk from COVID-19. He explained that older Americans infected with COVID-19 stand a greater risk of serious difficulty and even death from the virus.

All individuals should practice social distancing and minimize contact with others to minimize the risk to them and others.

With this decision, Secretary Raffensperger looks to confront the public health threat to the state, and the health of Georgians, while also maintaining an avenue for the people of Georgia to exercise their fundamental democratic right to vote.

In the midst of a public health emergency like the one Georgia is facing, taking strong action to protect all Georgians, including its dedicated poll workers, is paramount.