

MEDIA RELEASE

March 7, 2011

Source: UCP of Northwest Missouri, 3303 Frederick, 816-364-3836, c. 244-3907

25th Annual UCP Chili Challenge Surpasses Expectations; Brings in More Than \$120,000 to Boost UCP's Work for People with Disabilities

(St. Joseph, Mo.) Even 25 years later, they still like it hot.

“They” being the local businesses, teams, donors and guests who come out year after year to vie for top chili chef and the coveted People’s Choice Award – and “hot” referring to more than \$120,000 raised at the 25th annual UCP Heart of America Chili Challenge on Sunday, March 6, at the St. Joseph Civic Arena.

The 25th anniversary of the annual fundraiser event for UCP of Northwest Missouri surpassed expectations, bringing in more than \$120,000 to support the mission and programs of UCP. The non-profit agency, founded in 1968, works to create a life without limits for children and adults with disabilities across Buchanan County and Northwest Missouri. Core programs include an integrated preschool and therapies for children, an Adult Program focused on life skills, job coaching and development for adults with disabilities and advocacy services.

“The Chili Challenge event continues to just blow us away with the community’s generosity and enthusiasm,” says Teresa Gagliano, executive director, UCP of Northwest Missouri. “From the chili teams and auction donors, to the volunteers and the participants who come to the event, we can’t express how grateful we are for their belief in our mission. It just gets better and better.”

This year, 58 chili teams competed. Chili title categories include Missouri State Champion, Amateur, and Professional, along with the People’s Choice Award.

The People’s Choice Award is an especially hard-earned title, requiring a chili team to secure the most votes (in the form of monetary donations) to secure the award. Teams get more creative – and more competitive – each year to bring in their votes, hosting events like Jeans Days at workplaces and bringing in big-ticket items to sell raffle tickets on site at the Chili Challenge.

A fierce and friendly rivalry between top People’s Choice contenders captures attention each year. This year, Nestle Purina captured the People’s Choice title, raising an outstanding \$38,000 for their chili team. In an equally remarkable effort, the Scottish Rite Boys Are Back chili team raised over \$27,000 and captured 2nd place in the People’s Choice division. Third place was earned by Long Branch Crop Tours, with over \$5,000 donated to UCP.

(MORE)

“Capturing the People’s Choice Award is something the teams really dive into, and we are so appreciative of their enthusiasm toward doing whatever it takes to go after the title and raising support for UCP,” says Gagliano. “It’s stunning how generous this community is, especially when you consider that well over half of this year’s grand total for the event came from the individual efforts of chili team members asking for cash donations, collecting auction items, and coming up with creative activities at their booth to help bring in votes.”

The 25th Annual UCP Chili Challenge officially concluded with the closing of the online auction at 10 p.m., Sunday, March 6th. More than 110 items were donated from businesses across the Midwest, including vacation and travel packages, restaurants, sports tickets and unique experiences. Bidders across the region brought in nearly \$5,000 for UCP with their online purchases.

They arrive early. They stay late. And they care a great deal about UCP’s success at the annual Chili Challenge, the agency’s only major fundraising event for the year. This year’s exceptional \$120,000 total will help provide support to all of UCP’s programs for people with disabilities, including cerebral palsy, autism, Down syndrome, physical or communication delays, intellectual delays and many others.

25th Annual UCP Chili Challenge Awards:

Missouri State Champion:

- 1st Apple Market West, Todd Euler
- 2nd HI HO Bar and Grill, John Garvey
- 3rd Hi Ho Bar and Grill, John Garvey

Amateur:

- 1st Spontaneous Combustion II, Abe Black
- 2nd American Family Insurance, Scott Wineinger
- 3rd Hatfield's, Debbie Kingsley
- 4th Three Amigos, Van Hawxby
- 5th Knights of Columbus, Jimmy Edwards

Professional:

- 1st Apple Market West, Todd Euler
- 2nd Hi Ho, John Garvey
- 3rd Hi Ho, John Garvey
- 4th Pop's Place, Steve Holland
- 5th Apple Market North, Sharon Smith

Heart of America People's Choice Awards:

- 1st Ed Fisher, Nestle Purina \$38,352
- 2nd Bill Swope, Scottish Rite \$27,684
- 3rd John Thompson, Long Branch Crop Tours Limited \$5,457

For more information, visit www.ucpnwmo.org or call (816) 364-3836.