

## Empty Bowls History....

There is a story about a man who left this earth and was taken on a tour of the inner realms. He was shown a room where he saw a large group of hungry people trying to eat dinner. But because the spoons that they were trying to eat with were longer than their arms they remained frustrated. "This," his guide told him, is hell." "That's terrible, exclaimed the man. Please show me heaven!" "Very well" agreed the guide, and off they went. When they opened heaven's door the man was perplexed to see what looked like the very same scene, there was a group of people with spoons longer than their arms. As he looked more closely, he saw happy faces and full tummies. For there was one important difference, the people in heaven had learned to feed each other.

**Believe that we here on earth can learn to feed each other.**

Our goal is to raise money to help organizations to fight hunger, raise awareness about the issues of hunger and food security and bring about an attitude that will not allow hunger to exist.

The basic premise is simple: guests are served soup in a handmade bowl in exchange for a donation to fight hunger. They are asked to keep that bowl as a reminder of the meal's purpose. Every time they take that bowl from the cupboard, they will be reminded that someone's bowl is empty. So, on this occasion they have helped to change the world of an individual by elevating hunger. And can do so again any time.

All money collected will be donated to an organization fighting hunger chosen by the people involved in that particular event. The Interreligious Food Consortium has been the recipient of this fundraiser for the last 18 years!

Sounds simple? It is. Think about it. Ceramic and other craft students creating bowls, potters teaching students to make and glaze bowls, school service-learning projects happening at every level. The possibilities are endless.

We invite you to participate. From Empty Bowls humble beginnings as the meal for the staff for one high school, Empty Bowls has spread across the USA and around the world. Events across the United States and around the world are raising millions of dollars each year for anti-hunger organizations.

The Empty Bowls project was originally started by [John Hartom and Lisa Blackburn](#) in 1990. John and Lisa created the Imagine/Render Group. A 5013c non-profit organization that has raised millions of dollars around the world in support of anti-hunger organizations.

Bridget Hauser has spearheaded an annual Empty Bowls fundraiser for 10 years in Dripping Springs, Texas (pop. 1,548). "There's such great community support that we often have more volunteers than we need," she says. "More than 1,000 colorful bowls, made by area potters, were donated for last year's event." Hauser even contacted Hartom about attending her Texas fundraiser. "He politely declined," Hauser says. "John said, 'It's not about me.' He didn't want his presence to detract from local workers."

The soup lunch raised \$25,000 one year for the Dripping Springs Helping Hands food pantry, more than half its annual budget. “These funds let us supplement donations of canned goods with fresh items like eggs, cheese and meat,” says Mike Cave, president of Helping Hands. “With this money we are able to offer a variety of groceries at no cost, so we can let families shop for foods they actually want and will eat.”

**In Syracuse NY Empty Bowls has been raising money and awareness about hunger in our community for 17 years, starting in 2004 at Eureka Studios. It has grown to a large event housed at the Nancy Cantor Warehouse for the last several years. It easily is our largest fundraiser collecting usually over half of our annual budget at this one event. Normally we have over 1600 beautiful bowls provided by students and staff of the university as well as Clayscapes Pottery on West Fayette St.**

**Clayscapes has been a very faithful colleague in this effort in every sense of the word. They also have students working to make bowls, organize and staff volunteers, coordinate logistics of bowl delivery and other aspects of the event, as well as generously donating clay materials, etc. We're fortunate to have them as community partners sharing the load.**

Events in larger cities often include silent auctions or art sales, and can bring in donations totaling up to \$100,000. But wherever an Empty Bowls event is held, the basic concept remains the same: In exchange for a donation—usually between \$20 and \$30—participants get a meal and a bowl to remind them of hunger. **This year because of Covid we will not be able to offer soup, for which we are very disappointed. The meal provides a chance to build community and that will be missed.**

“Empty Bowls events educate people and provide a means to create positive and lasting change in their own communities,” Hartom says. “The empty bowl has become a metaphor for the power people feel when they help erase world hunger.”

Hauser embraces that powerful feeling. “All I had to do was act,” she says. “Now I don’t think I’ll ever stop.”

\*\*\*\*\*

With the passing of John Hartom, the Empty Bowls Project has passed into your hands. You are changing the world around you one bowl at a time. Please share your heart with the world. Be fearless, Be free.

**Think Globally, Act Locally.**

**Contact us:**

**INTERRELIGIOUS FOOD CONSORTIUM (IFC)**  
**731 James Street**  
**Syracuse, NY 13203**  
**315-474-8855 [ifcifc@hotmail.com](mailto:ifcifc@hotmail.com) [lfccny.org](http://lfccny.org)**