

Take home pottery for hunger relief in Unity

BY ABIGAIL CURTIS
BDN STAFF

UNITY — The farms and pastureland around the town of Unity are rich and productive, but that doesn't mean that everyone in the area has an easy time getting enough good food to eat.

That's why a group of dedicated volunteers is once again holding an event to help support hunger relief in the Unity area — the much-loved Empty Bowls benefit dinner. The event features beautiful, locally made pottery bowls and locally sourced food, according to Sara Trunzo, director of the area non-profit organization Veggie For All, and Mary Leaming of the Unity Barn Raisers.

People who come to the benefit dinner, to be held on Tuesday, March 15, at the new Unity Food Hub building, will share in a

simple soup dinner and take home one of the bowls they find there.

"The idea is to bring home a very tangible reminder of all the folks in the community who have less equal access to good food," Trunzo said. "It's a big concept, and a simple meal."

So far this year, 137 handmade bowls have been donated to the event. They have come from the potters at Unity Pond Pottery, the Unity College art department, the Mount View High School art department and many other artists around the county and state.

"The stuff is breathtaking," Leaming said.

The ingredients for the meal also will be mostly from local sources, including grains, dry beans and vegetables.

"It all comes back to food and agriculture," Trunzo said. "The food insecurity

issue in Waldo County does mirror the phenomenon happening across the state. Shockingly, about one in four children in Maine experiences food insecurity, and about one in five seniors experiences food insecurity. Parts of Waldo County are even classified as a food desert."

According to the United States Department of Agriculture, food deserts can be defined in many ways, but usually are areas with a lack of access to healthy food, lower levels of family income and limited public transportation, among other indicators.

"It's really a kind of heartbreaking irony of rural communities where food is getting produced, and yet sometimes folks in those communities can't afford the local food," Trunzo said.

The Volunteer Regional Food Pantry serves about 1,500 people, and funds

raised at the Empty Bowls event will be an integral part of the agency's operating budget. Trunzo and Leaming said that one of the things they appreciate about their community is how much residents are willing to help neighbors who need a hand.

"We think it's the best town ever," Leaming said, adding that she also is looking forward to having attendees check out the old school building that has been renovated into the Unity Food Hub. "We're all sharing ideas. We're all invested in making our community a better space."

Empty Bowls 2016 will be held from 5 to 7 p.m. Tuesday, March 15, at Maine Farmland Trust's Unity Food Hub at 69 School Street, Unity. For more information or to make a donation, contact Mary Leaming at 948-9005 or at programs@unitybarnraisers.org.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

These are some of the handmade pottery bowls that people will be able to take home from the Empty Bowls 2016 meal, to be held on Tuesday, March 15, in Unity. All funds raised at the meal will support hunger relief in the Unity area.

Mindfulness exercises help troubled teens cope

BY MEREDITH COHN
THE BALTIMORE SUN

BALTIMORE — When 16-year-old Kirsten White is in class and feels distracted, frustrated or angry, she looks at the tiles on the ceiling or the bricks on the walls and counts them.

It gives her the chance to pause and think before she acts.

"I take a minute, and no one realizes it," the Annapolis teenager says. "It calms me."

The mindfulness exercise is one of many she's learned and embraced in a residential program at Sheppard Pratt, a psy-

chiatric hospital in Towson, Maryland, where she has been living and going to school since November. The training has helped her cope with the burdens of her young life, which have included bullying, emotional problems and self-harm.

Mindfulness meditation is an ancient spiritual practice that was introduced into health care in the 1970s by a University of Massachusetts professor of medicine who believed it could help patients reduce stress. The practice continues to spread, with classes offered in offices, universities, hospitals and online

to help promote relaxation and focus.

Now, as science begins to back up the benefits, mindfulness is being adopted in clinical settings to help providers and patients manage a host of disorders.

The idea is to focus intensely on the present, emptying the mind of outside influences, judgments or stressors, says Tess Carpenter, clinical director of residential programs at Sheppard Pratt.

Mindfulness is the core of the institution's Mann Residential Treatment Program, the behavioral training program launched in 2011 to help

troubled teens tolerate distress and improve emotional and interpersonal responses in situations they find overwhelming.

The patients have diagnoses that include attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and anxiety.

Carpenter calls mindfulness "very abstract in nature" and tough to teach. Research shows it doesn't work on everyone. Some people don't take to it, just as plenty of people don't get the benefits of yoga, which embraces similar themes.

Kirsten, who's in 10th grade, says she was one of those people. When a counselor proposed the therapy, she was hesitant. She ultimately decided to give it a try.

Students in the treatment center repeat the exercises daily while also participating in more traditional therapy.

Counselors have the teens

stare at their thumbs, or blow up balloons and bat them in the air for a few minutes.

That teaches them to concentrate on an activity, Carpenter says, filtering out distractions. In the real world, it could snap them out of an overly emotional situation and give them a window of time to rethink their response.

It's using "your wise mind," Carpenter said.

Dr. Carl Fulwiler, medical director and associate research director for the Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care and Society at the University of Massachusetts Medical School, says there's now a critical mass of studies showing mindfulness exercises are effective in helping to control stress, pain, weight and depression.

There are some problems, such as anxiety disorders in which patients can't focus, where the practice hasn't been proved effective, Fulwiler

says. Outside a clinical setting, mindfulness can be harmful — as when it brings up buried memories or repressed feelings.

But with pain, for example, mindfulness may reduce suffering by making the brain less sensitive to what's happening in the body, he says. In other cases, such as when people cope with stress by eating, drinking alcohol or taking drugs, mindfulness can help people become more aware and make different choices.

"It's how we react to things that mindfulness can help," Fulwiler says. "It's not a total panacea."

In a 2014 study of 47 mindfulness-based trials, researchers at the Johns Hopkins University said they found enough evidence of its benefits that doctors should be prepared to talk to patients about it. They also concluded that more study into who would benefit is warranted.

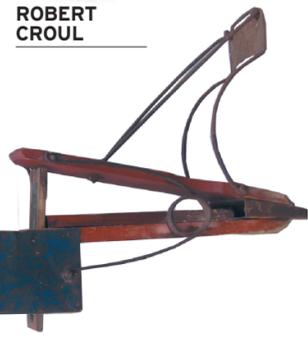


WHAT IS IT?

Send your answers for this week's What Is It (left) to: Robert Croul, 1095 North Road, Newburgh, Maine 04444. Readers may respond by email to recestate@myfairpoint.net. Be sure to write "What is it?" in the subject line.



ROBERT
CROUL



The What Is It in the Feb. 27 edition of the Bangor Daily News was correctly identified as a vintage corn planter (many are still in use today) by Charlene Priest of East Millinocket, Vicki Stanley of Mattawamkeag, Mike and Della Gleason of Bangor, Ted Bromage of Somesville, Andrea Pelletier of Fort Fairfield, Richard DeGraaf of Camden, O.K. Blackstone of Caribou, Fred Otto of Orono, Erwin Flewelling of Northport, Stephen Dickinson and Fred Grooms of Presque Isle, Roslyn Reed of Trenton, Albert Jackson of Morrill, Jeff Orchard of Charlotte, John Folsom of Houlton, Brenda Harrington of Spruce Head, Diane Terry of Prospect, Bob Hawes

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