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Naperville Sun

Cuisine event leaves all satisfied

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By DAVID SHAROS For The Sun

The unseasonably warm weather this weekend provided the perfect opportunity for some major cruising, even for those without a convertible.

The Tellabs Atrium on West Diehl Road was the place to cruise Saturday night as Naperville CARES held its sixth annual Cuisine for a Cause event, featuring 3 ½ hours' worth of non-stop noshing, wine sampling, live entertainment, and auctions — all geared toward raising funds for the not-for-profit group.

This year's event drew more than 15 new vendors offering sample-size portions of some of their signature dishes, including ethnic cuisines spanning the entire palate from Chinese and Indian to the more traditional Italian and American.

Based on pre-registration of guests, executive director Janet Derrick said about 500 people were expected to attend Saturday night, which made Naperville CARES officials hopeful about matching or surpassing the \$80,000 raised at the event a year ago. During the event, Derrick predicted this year's total would be closer to \$90,000.

"The amount of money we'll make tonight probably all depends on what the silent and live auction items go for," Derrick said. "You can never tell what people will want, but given the economy, we felt that matching the amount raised last year would be a good goal."



Tom Ryan of Naperville tastes tuna snacks served by Lisa Jordan from Hugo's Frog Bar on Saturday at the Naperville CARES sixth annual Cuisine for a Cause. Their were more than 30 area restaurants participating in the event at the Naperville Tellabs

(Terence Guider-Shaw/For The Sun)

Derrick said highlights among the auction items this year included dinner for eight at Sullivan's, Cubs tickets, golf packages, and a chance to stay for free at a Florida condo.

Guests marveled at the quality of the food and said supporting the Naperville CARES group would likely bring them back another year.

"This is the first time I've come out for this, and I really feel like I'd do it again," said Sheryl Hirsch of Plainfield, who learned of the event thanks to a friend from church. "Too many people today slip through the cracks — they know about the governmental agencies but not organizations like this that can really help. I'm happy to be here with a group of people that want to help."

Brian Andersen, a former district governor for Rotary International and a resident of Downers Grove, also attended for the first time and said he wanted to support the community.

"I know that 'My Chef' out of Naperville is coordinating this event, and they do phenomenal work for the community and I try to support whatever they do," Andersen said. "The community support here in Naperville is phenomenal and we wanted to contribute to that. We've already put a bid on some auction items because raising money is what it's all about."

Newcomer Jimmy Sneed, the head chef at Sugar Toad, said "interest in food nationwide has become a great way to raise money for a good cause" and that there was no question about his restaurant pitching in.

"Chefs have kind of reached celebrity status today, but I'm still a cook," he said. "We wanted to be a part of this when we heard about it — it's important to be a part of the community."