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Taste of the Town toasts event founder

Chef started fundraiser 35 years ago

BY JOHN MOLSEED
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A diner who came to chef Fred Regal with a problem years ago unwittingly set him on a 35-year commitment that's raised hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Regal, who was a chef at the former Hoffman House restaurant, heard from a customer that the Salvation Army had fallen short of fundraising goals. To help fill the gap, Regal contacted other chefs around town and planned the first Taste of the Town fundraiser.

The 35th annual event Sunday at the Rochester International Event Center drew more than 650 people, and Regal was honored for his role in establishing the event and participating each year.

The event has evolved to raise funds for the Salvation Army's Good Samaritan clinic. The clinic serves more than 3,000 people a year with medical and dental care.

The first year of the event, Regal was joined by two other restaurants.

"Of course, it's hard to get chefs to come out on a Sunday

because they work all week," Regal said. "Why would they want to work and do something like this?"

The other reason the event started so small?

"Back in those days, there were fewer restaurants," Regal said.

On Sunday, more than 20 restaurants and food vendors offered attendees samples.

Although the Taste of the Town has been around for 35 years, the medical clinic opened 23 years ago and the dental clinic was established about four years later. As need rose along with healthcare costs, the event has become a fundraiser exclusively for the clinic.

Regal, for the 35th year, prepared food for the event and served it through his Regal Catering business.

He also perused the other vendor and chef offerings like a general inspecting his troops. He arrived at Tonic, a first-time vendor at the event this year. He asked Tony Pester about his open-face brioche with bacon, greens, jam and tomato.

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Fred Regal, right, speaks Sunday with chef Nathan Lehman at the Taste of Town fundraiser for the Rochester Salvation Army Good Samaritan Clinic.

A record! Hurray?



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John Giudicessi, right, of Rochester, and his one-year-old son, Hugo, try to catch snowflakes Saturday while walking to their car after visiting the Quarry Hill Nature Center in Rochester. The snow from this weekend pushed the winter's snow total to 86.8 inches, a new record.

Rochester sets snow record; flooding threat ebbs

BY BRIAN TODD
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Despite the expectation of rain pretty much every day this week, the flooding situation along the Mississippi River should improve as the week progresses.

While today's rain across Southeast Minnesota will give way to a partly cloudy night, up to a quarter of an inch is expected Tuesday and another half-inch Tuesday night, according to the National Weather Service in La Crosse. A cloudy Wednesday will be followed by a 40 percent chance of rain Wednesday night that will continue through early Thursday afternoon.

The skies should begin to clear Thursday night and even become sunny Friday, but a slight chance of rain Friday night will be followed with an increased chance Saturday.

Those expectations are similar from Austin to Rochester to Red Wing, the weather service reports.

The snow from this weekend pushed the winter's snow totals to 86.8 inches, a new record, topping the previous high of 85.1 inches set in 1996-97.

Still, the snow and rain from this weekend, along with the totals predicted, won't add to the flooding misery along the Mississippi River. Waters are expected to continue to recede from high levels during the weekend that pushed into the minor and moderate flooding stages in Red Wing, Wabasha and Winona. The weather service predicts the waters should continue to slowly drop

through the week.

That doesn't mean there's no flooding impact. Both Minnesota Highway 60 from U.S. Highway 61/Pembroke Avenue to Hiawatha Drive in Wabasha and Minnesota Highway 74 from Weaver to Winona County Road 30 near Beaver are closed due to high water, according to the Minnesota Department of Transportation.

Brenda Tomlinson, the Wabasha County Emergency Management director, said there is some improvement, but getting those roads open could take a while. "The one under the railroad trestles is markedly lower," Tomlinson said. "But the river is going down so slowly."

While the forecast for the river has improved because the area was not hit with as much snow and rain as expected this weekend, she said, "They'll probably still be closed through this week."

Hundreds of women gather to hear message of spiritual healing

BY BRIAN TODD
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It's OK to be broken. Grace will fix what life has damaged.

That was a key message Friday and Saturday at Autumn Ridge Church where more than 1,100 women gathered to hear nationally known speakers deliver messages of faith during the 13th annual Devoted Hearts conference.

"Women get strength from each other, and every woman has a need to connect with another woman and connect with God," said Jennifer Rothschild, an author who has written 11 books and Bible studies, and was one

of the speakers at the conference.

Rothschild, who has been blind since she was a teenager, helped spread the message of the weekend's theme that just because you're broken doesn't mean you're not beautiful.

Giving women a safe place to gather and learn from one another and lean on one another is part of that broken and beautiful message.

Beth Morrell, of Rochester, said she's come to the Devoted Hearts conference five times.

"I try to leave all my worries behind and open my heart to what the speakers might evoke in my heart," Morrell said.

Rothschild said having that safe place allows women to show their

strengths, their weaknesses, and their failures. "It becomes a safe place for women to just be who they are," she said. "They can leave their pretense at the door and be fully accepted for who they are."

Sheila Walsh, the weekend's other main speaker, said she spent "so many years trying to be a perfect Christian."

"You don't have to be perfect," she said. "It's not about that."

Walsh pointed to the way social media influences young girls, who think the Photoshopped and perfectly posed pictures of Instagram, Facebook or Twitter are the standard they need to live up to.

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Andrew Link / alink@postbulletin.com

Jino Stoner, of Winona, holds her hands up Saturday as musician Jonny Diaz leads worship with music during the Devoted Hearts Conference at Autumn Ridge Church in Rochester. More than 1,100 women attended the conference.

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