



Pie in the Sky Bake Sale aims to set record for Mama's Kitchen

Traditional Thanksgiving meals will be served to clients

BY KENNETH HARVEY

With plenty of mouth watering pies to choose from, the Mama's Kitchen Mama's Pie in the Sky Thanksgiving Bake Sale is currently taking place through Nov. 22. This year, the organization has set a goal to sell 5,000 pies and earn \$100,000.

"Last year we sold an impressive 3,600 pies through the Mama's Pie in the Sky Bake Sale and we hope to increase that number this year," said Alberto Cortes, executive director of Mama's Kitchen.

According to Cortes, this year's pie sales are similar to last year's.

"The bulk of the sale usually happens within the last few weeks of the sale of pies," Cortes said. "We're anticipating a significant increase in the coming days and starting this week."

The bake sale is the organization's second largest fundraiser, following its Mama's Day event. Cortes affirms the organization has cut costs in an attempt to eliminate the organization's budget deficit.

"We are functioning with a smaller budget this year," Cortes said. "Despite the smaller budget, we are serving 14 percent more meals this year to date than we did in the same period last year."

Cortes said the number of clients served has increased every year, for the last few years.

The bake sale features many holiday favorites such as pumpkin, pecan, apple, and sugar-free apple pies. Volunteer baker Elizabeth Harris, owner of Elizabethan Desserts, a bakery in Encinitas, is baking pies for the bake sale in her bakery.

"We make the pies here and you can always count on the fact that they're yummy and good," Harris said. Elizabethan Desserts will producing all the pie varieties for the fundraiser.



Mama's Kitchen executive director Alberto Cortés with Mama's Kitchen Board Member at Large Rachelle Carvajal and Mama's Kitchen Board President Scott Gardner.

Harris has volunteered for Mama's Kitchen for four years.

"I'm not a huge corporation and it's not as easy for me," she said. The economy has been tough on small businesses like Elizabethan Desserts, but Harris' commitment to Mama's Kitchen is unwavering.

"I would say to anybody, even if you don't have any money you can always do something," she said, adding the organization is her favorite charity. "When I first started doing stuff for Mama's Kitchen I didn't have a lot of money. We give our time and resources."

Rachelle Carvajal serves as a member at large for Mama's Kitchen. Carvajal volunteered for the organization for eight years before joining the board of directors. Carvajal also works for SeaWorld as an associate marketing representative. This year, SeaWorld will donate 1,000 pumpkin pies to Mama's Kitchen.

"Mama's Kitchen is something we believe in," Carvajal said. "It's an organization that affects everyone. It's county-wide, so it touches a lot of folks."

In addition to the Bake Sale festivities, Mama's Kitchen will deliver traditional turkey dinners to clients on Thanksgiving.

"We have our ongoing volunteers volunteer their time and help prepare the special meal, package and deliver it on Thanksgiving day," she said.

Although Mama's Kitchen started as an organization to serve people living with HIV/AIDS, the organization has expanded its reach to help people with cancer and other terminal illnesses.

Cortes, however, emphasized the organization's commitment to the HIV/AIDS community.

"It's the genesis of our organization and our commitment is unchanged," Cortes said, noting more than two-thirds of the organization's clients identify with the GLBT community.

"I also make a request to our community for continued support of our mission. We have great support from the [GLBT] community and we have great impact on the [GLBT] community."

Cortes, Harris and Carvajal all look forward to the Thanksgiving holiday. Carvajal intends to buy two pies from the bake sale – one apple and one pumpkin.

Cortes's attitude reflects a giving holiday spirit, an attitude synonymous with Mama's Kitchen.

"It is tremendously rewarding to provide nutritious meals, comfort and hope to fellow community members affected by AIDS or cancer," Cortes concluded.

A variety of organizations sponsor the bake sale including Wells Fargo, Sycuan, The French Gourmet, The Greater San Diego Business Association, Intuit and First Unitarian Universalist Church.

Next year will mark the 20th Anniversary of Mama's Kitchen. Since the organization's inception in 1990, Mama's Kitchen has delivered more than five million meals.

Pie orders can be completed and paid for online. Pies are \$20. \$15 is tax deductible. Pies must be picked up the day before Thanksgiving (Wednesday, Nov. 25) between the hours of 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. The organization has designated more than 20 sites all over San Diego County for customers to choose from. For more information, visit www.mamaskitchen.org or call 619-233-6262.