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Asbury Café to Reach Million-Dollar Milestone

State Fair Charity Gives All Proceeds to Feed the Hungry

ALBUQUERQUE, NM – The 2011 New Mexico State Fair will bring another milestone to the Asbury Cafe, the Fair's longest-running all-charity business.

“According to the records we’ve kept over the years, at the end of last year’s State Fair, we’ve donated just under \$975,000 to charities since the Asbury Cafe began in 1960,” said Paul Merritt, the 2011 General Chairman for the Cafe. “Based on sales from last year, that means we’ll top the **\$1 million** mark at just about the halfway point of this year’s fair.”

“The Asbury Cafe celebrated its 50th Anniversary last year,” added Publicity Chairman Michael Bischoff. “Thanks to declarations by then-Governor Richardson, Mayor Berry, and media coverage, we raised \$52,400 in the 13 days of last year’s fair. We’re almost exactly at that pace again this year.”

“We are so proud to host the Asbury Café and to be a part of the incredible work they do in the community,” said State Fair Interim General Manager Dan Mourning. “Raising a million dollars to feed New Mexico’s hungry is a feat unto itself—the fact that Asbury has been able to do so just selling slices of pie for a handful of days once a year is amazing, and a testament to the giving spirit of New Mexicans.”

The number of days Asbury Café has been open over the last 51 years totals just over 700; meaning it has raised the \$1 million in only about two years time.

For most of the years of its existence, the Asbury Cafe has donated 100 percent of its proceeds to local food programs and charities that feed the poor and needy. Merritt said that this year’s recipients of money raised by the Cafe include **The Albuquerque Rescue Mission, Project Share, St. Martin's Hospitality Center, The Storehouse, First United Methodist Church's Grace Meal Program, Albuquerque Meals On Wheels, Noon Day Ministries, South Albuquerque Cooperative Ministry, Good Shepherd Center, and the Interfaith Hospitality Network.**

“We have hundreds of individuals donating their efforts to the Asbury Cafe,” said Bischoff. “Two to three dozen individuals volunteer to run the actual cafe every day of the fair, and many more work behind the scenes at church pie parties as well as picking and preparing fruit, transporting pies to the fair, and doing set-up and shut-down before and after the fair. No churches or workers get any compensation so we can keep giving everything to those who need it most. Some of our volunteers have been with us for decades.”

“A million dollars since 1960 may not seem like a lot,” reflects Merritt, “but when you consider that the cafe is only open during the fair, the total number of days we’ve been open in all that time adds up to somewhere around two years. For a small, all-volunteer operation selling just the range of items we do, that’s something to be proud of.”

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For updates, interviews, or further information on the Asbury Cafe, please contact General Chairman Paul Merritt at 821-5292, or Publicity & Media Coordinator Michael Bischoff at 331-6880.