

MORE THAN A BOWL

A PLANT CITY TRADITION THAT HELPS FEED OUR NEIGHBORS



By Scarlett Haynes

Local flavor. Student creativity. An evening together. United Food Bank & Services invites the community to the 16th Annual Empty Bowls: Soups at Sunset, presented by Driscoll's

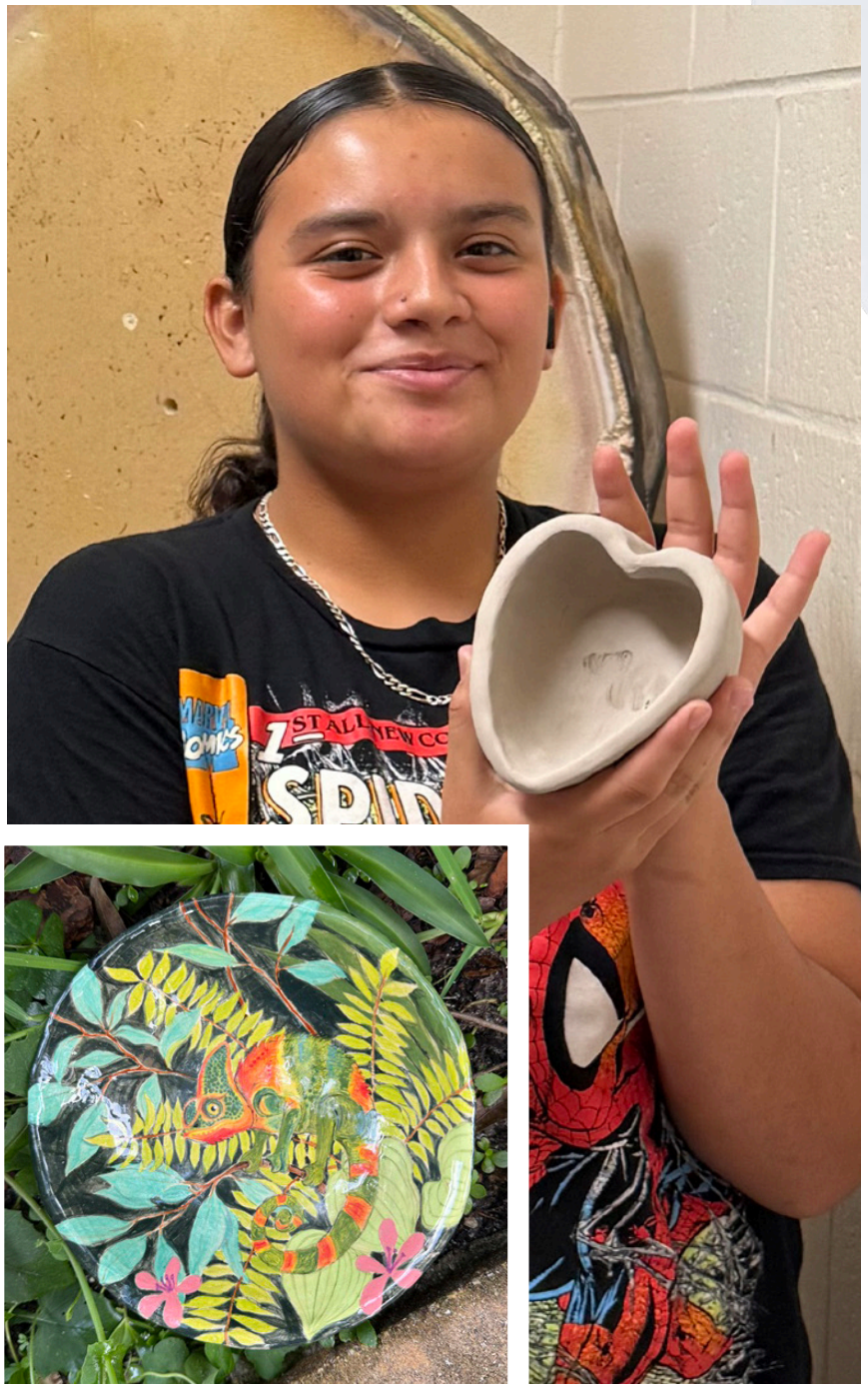
A bowl shaped in a school art room. A one-of-a-kind bowl painted by a local artist. A soup prepared in a local kitchen. A ticket purchased by someone who wants to help.

Each is a small act. Together, they help make sure our neighbors have the food they need.

On Saturday, November 14, 2026, from 4 to 7 p.m., those acts of generosity will come together at the Robert W. Willaford Railroad Museum in Downtown Plant City for United Food Bank & Services' 16th Annual Empty Bowls: Soups at Sunset, presented by Driscoll's.
This year, the beloved community tradition begins a new chapter with an evening celebration filled with local food, handmade art, live entertainment and activities for the whole family.

For $20 general admission or $10 for K–12 students, guests can sample soups, sides and bites, choose a handmade student bowl and ceramic heart to take home, and enjoy live entertainment and family activities—all included with admission. K–12 admission also includes grilled cheese.

Tickets are available now at Givebutter.com/c/empty-bowls-soups-at-sunset or can be purchased at event check-in on November 14. More than a night of food and entertainment, Empty Bowls is a celebration of the people, creativity and generosity that make Plant City special—all while helping ensure our neighbors have access to nutritious food.





An Evening of Local Flavor and Connection

Come with friends. Bring the family. Make it a downtown date night. Guests can sample offerings from local favorites including Fred's Market, Johnson's Barbeque, Keel Farms, Outback Steakhouse Plant City, Blue Collar Burger, Hungry Howie's Plant City, Jesse's Steak and Seafood, Potbelly Plant City, Strawberry Crest High School Culinary Department, South Florida Baptist Hospital, Texas Roadhouse Brandon, Gordon Food Service, Felton's, United Food Bank & Services and more. The Plant City Junior Woman's Club will serve beverages and treats.
These partners are sharing more than food. They are giving their time, talent and resources to help nourish the community they call home.
The evening's entertainment will feature Ace Jackson & The Jump Kings, saxophonist Larry Clark and DJ Nugget, bringing music and energy to the museum grounds throughout the night. Tyler White will perform the National Anthem.

For younger guests, the Kids Zone, brought to life by the YMCA Teen Leaders Club, will offer games and activities, with craft tables, yard games and balloon artist Bruce Young, adding even more family fun.
Children can also check out a fire engine, meet Plant City Fire Rescue firefighters and learn about fire safety. The Plant City Police Department will bring police motorcycles and an activity for young guests, while the Plant City Republican Women Federated will invite attendees to write notes of encouragement and gratitude for veterans and service members.

Guests can browse a silent auction featuring experiences and prizes, including tickets to area theme parks and museums. One of the evening's signature moments, the Featured Artist Bowl Live Auction, will spotlight one-of-a-kind, hand-painted bowls created by local artists—an opportunity to bring home something special while supporting neighbors facing hunger.

Raffles, giveaways and complimentary UFB swag will add to the fun, with additional merchandise available for purchase. Guests ages 21 and older can also enjoy beer provided by Leaven Brewing and wine provided by Roots Wine Bar, featuring wines from Clay Shannon. Valid identification is required.

Small Hands. Big Hearts.

One of the most meaningful parts of Empty Bowls begins long before the event—in art classrooms across the community.

Students from 25 local schools are creating hundreds of ceramic bowls and hearts for this year's event. Every piece begins with clay and a student's imagination. Each becomes a way to help someone else. Guests can choose a bowl handmade by a local middle or high school student to take home. In the new Artist Alley, ceramic hearts created by elementary students can be personalized at craft stations and turned into ornaments, necklaces, magnets or other keepsakes.

For families, it's a chance to celebrate the creativity of local students and schools. For the young artists, it's a lesson that reaches far beyond the classroom: you are never too young to make a difference.

And for every guest who carries a bowl and heart home, it's a lasting reminder of what people can accomplish together.

16th Annual Empty Bowls: Soups at Sunset

Presented by Driscoll's
Saturday, November 14, 2026 | 4–7 p.m.
Robert W. Willaford Railroad Museum | Downtown Plant City

General Admission: $20 | K–12 Student Admission: $10

Admission includes soups, sides and bites, a handmade student bowl and ceramic heart, live entertainment, Kids Zone and family activities, balloon art, giveaways and more. K–12 admissions also includes grilled cheese, available for kids.

Purchase your tickets today or at event check-in on November 14!
Givebutter.com/c/empty-bowls-soups-at-sunset

To sponsor, donate an auction item or become an event partner:

Contact Scarlett Haynes, Community Engagement & Events Manager, at **shaynes@ufbpc.org.**

Your Ticket Helps Keep Food Within Reach

The celebration lasts one evening. Its impact reaches much further.

Hunger can affect a working parent whose paycheck no longer stretches far enough for groceries, a senior balancing food with other household expenses or a child who needs meals when school is out.

United Food Bank & Services helps neighbors throughout Eastern Hillsborough County access food, education, resources and compassionate support. Proceeds from Empty Bowls help sustain that year-round mission—from pantry groceries and Kids Weekend Bags for local students to F.E.E.D. nutrition education and cooking demonstrations.

“We’re seeing more people who never thought they would need a food bank coming to us for help,” said Mary Heysek, president and CEO of United Food Bank & Services. “We could not do what we do without the support of our community. Empty Bowls is such a great example of what happens when people come together for a common purpose. It’s not just an event—it’s our community saying, ‘We care, and we’re going to help.’”

There’s a Place for You at Empty Bowls

You don’t have to shape clay or prepare soup to be part of this tradition.

Purchase tickets. Invite a neighbor. Bring your coworkers. Gather your family. Every ticket, partnership and contribution helps keep this work moving forward.

And when the evening is over, guests will leave with more than memories.

Some will carry a ceramic bowl shaped by the hands of a local student. Others may leave with a hand-painted artist bowl, a keepsake heart or a winning auction item.
But the most meaningful thing they take home may be knowing what their evening helped make possible:
A family able to turn to the food pantry when groceries are running low.

A child with food for the weekend.

A neighbor finding resources, education and compassionate support during a difficult season.
And a community willing to come together to make all of it possible.

On November 14, gather your favorite people and join Plant City for an evening with a purpose.

Come hungry. Leave connected. Help nourish our community.





