



The 32nd Annual Taste of Mississippi

This event has been a Jackson-area favorite for over three decades where dozens of Mississippi chefs and fine restaurateurs come to share their finest culinary delights. What's to look forward to? Fabulous Area Restaurants, Liquor and Wine Distributors, Live Entertainment, An Awesome Silent Auction, and, of course, YOU! All proceeds will benefit Stewpot ministries.

JOIN US

When: Monday, April 1, 2019
 Where: The Historic Ice House Venue
 Music: Hunter Gibson & the Gators
 Time: 7pm – 10pm
 Tickets: \$70 in Advance - \$90 at the Door

Tickets are available at:
 Stewpot Main Office, Beckham Custom Jewelry, Lemuria Book Store and www.tasteofms.org or calling Michelle Bingham at 601-540-8555.

Stewpot
 Community Services
 P.O. Box 3610
 Jackson, MS 39207
 Phone: 601-353-2759
 Fax: 601-353-7071
 E-mail: www.stewpot.org

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Faith meeting needs in our community

STEW POT SPEAKERS

There are so many Stewpot ministries where you can share your gifts. We promise that it will be worth your while to come check us out or to let us come share with you. If you would like for us to speak at your church, civic, or school function, please call Michelle Bingham at 601-353-2759. We will gladly share all of the exciting information about our ministries and how you can become a part of our Stewpot family.



Raise Money for Stewpot just by shopping at Kroger

Did you know you can support Stewpot just by shopping at Kroger? It's easy when you enroll in Kroger Community Rewards! To get started, go to www.kroger.com and click on the Community link. That will bring you to the Kroger Community Rewards page. Sign up with your Plus Card and select a local organization you wish to support (Stewpot). Once you're enrolled, you'll earn rewards for your chosen organization every time you shop and use your Kroger Plus Card!



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A Newsletter of Stewpot Community Services

Spring 2019

Blue Cross Blue Shield: 32ND ANNUAL TASTE OF MISSISSIPPI EVENT



April showers are not bringing in May flowers! In fact, April's not bringing in showers at all. It's ushering in the Blue Cross & Blue Shield Taste of Mississippi. The restaurants are cooking up something special and their aromas will fill the air on April 1. So, the clock is ticking as restaurateurs plan their fair for stiff competition because they'll be vying for the best of the best— all in support of Stewpot Community Services. We need you to get your palate ready for culinary creations that will definitely delight your senses.

The Blue Cross Blue Shield 32nd annual Taste of Mississippi hits The Historic Ice House Venue Monday, April 1, 7-10 p.m. Taste of Mississippi, named a top 20 Event by the Southeastern Tourism Society, brings together fantastic restaurants, local



beverage distributors, live music, and a silent auction.

In 2018, Taste of Mississippi raised \$100,000 to help keep Stewpot's 13 ministries doors open, lights on and guests fed. Help us beat that number this year by getting your ticket(s) TODAY at www.tasteofms.org. Advance tickets are \$70 and at the door tickets are \$90.



See you at 251 West South Street in Jackson! Doors open at 7pm.



Director's Corner

Chef and restaurateur Grant Nooe can be credited for bringing the idea for Taste of Mississippi to Jackson.

Over 30 years ago, Grant learned about a food-tasting event in Washington,

DC, called Taste of the Nation that raised money for Share Our Strength, a national organization whose mission is to end hunger and poverty. Back then, Share Our Strength gave local communities a template for planning; in return, each community sent a portion of the funds raised back to Share Our Strength. Grant reached out to Stewpot; Stewpot gladly accepted Grant's invitation to give it a try.

Because many Jackson restaurants and wine vendors were eager to participate,

Taste of the Nation flourished. Over time, we decided to keep all of the proceeds from the event local...and so we changed the name. But that opened up new worlds of possibility: with fine restaurants being opened all around the state, we starting inviting eateries as far as Hattiesburg and Greenwood.

Taste of Mississippi has become one of the premiere events in the Jackson Metro area. And, we estimate that since its inception, Taste of Mississippi has



What's So Great About Taste of Mississippi?

"Stewpot does incredible work in the community while at the same time providing a structured outlet for the good intentions of hundreds of volunteers. Structure focuses energy into forms that are much more efficient than hundreds of people each doing their own nice thing. That Stewpot has found ways to make fundraising fun for participants and volunteers alike is simply a testament to a thorough understand of the human spirit." - Gretchen Cook

What's so great about *Taste of Mississippi*? A long-time volunteer Gretchen Cook, was asked this question. She responds in her own words:

The Beneficiaries. Stewpot is a multi-faceted organization using many different methods to meet the needs of people in a wide variety of situations. When I see a cold or hungry person in need of a handout, there is really no way I can meet his or her needs. I am not a counselor, a tailor, dietician, hotelier, doctor, and career advisor or transportation service. I may be able to thrust a few dollars out a car window, but I am not able to make any real difference in this person's life. Stewpot

can and does make a tangible difference in countless lives every day. They *do* have staff and volunteers who are professionals, who know how to screen clients and best serve their needs. When we support Stewpot, we make available meaningful assistance, not just easy handouts.

The Volunteers. At *Taste of Mississippi* you will find an impressive cross section of Mississippi. All ages, incomes and walks of life are represented. At one recent meeting a member said to me, "We can't afford to support community organizations with money, so we give our time and energy." At the actual event, hundreds of hands come together to pull off a logistically complicated ballet. Tasks range from operating credit card machines to clean up. And all the volunteers give joyfully and enthusiastically, shoulder to shoulder. It's an image of reconciliation in action.

The Restaurants. If you're like us, you may have found your circle of restaurants narrowing as you fall into the habit of eating at your favorite places. After all, you know you'll like your entrée at your regular place; it's risky to invest a whole evening in something you may or may not enjoy. *Taste of Mississippi* is just that—a sampling of some of the state's finest restaurants. We enjoy the chance to see what other restaurants are all about, many times seeing the chefs in action. Awards are presented to winners for the best in each category—so restaurants aren't just serving, they competing. Which makes everything even better.

The Beverages. At the *Taste of Mississippi* Planning Committee meetings we've noticed an interesting phenomenon. It's easier to get major distributors to donate amazing varieties of wine and spirits than it is to locate bottled water. Why? Because the distributors are anxious to promote the newest offerings from their representative distilleries and vineyards. End result? Simply too many choices to make. It's probably impossible to sample everything... and very likely not even advisable.

The Music. Live music is a great enhancer of any occasion and the groups selected to play at *Taste of Mississippi* are no exception.

We don't get to hang out in places where there is live music very often—and *Taste of Mississippi* always reminds us of what we are missing.

The Silent Auction. It could be art from local and regional artists, to dining gift cards, to kitchen appliances and tools, to jewelry, to an endless array of tempting options. Selling prices are often well below market prices. It's a win-win situation for everyone.

About the Author:

Bill and Gretchen Cook were involved in Taste of Mississippi for more years than they have kept track of. Their involvement ranged from minor, but fun (i.e., food judges), to highly involved as site coordinators and financial directors. "No matter what our role, we've always left the venue tired, but thrilled to have been a part of such an amazing event," says Gretchen Cook.

-this article was first published in the 2008 newsletter-

Director's Corner continued

raised over \$1 million for Stewpot. We could not be more grateful for Grant's vision; for the hard work of the volunteers who plan it every year; and **for the restaurants and wine vendors who make the event what it is – an experience in tasting the best of what Mississippi has to offer!**

Each year's Taste of Mississippi event is a unique opportunity to support our local chefs and restaurants **while raising money for a great cause.** This year is no different. Remember: all of the proceeds from Taste of Mississippi go straight to making sure that our neighbors who are in great need are provided the food, shelter, clothing, encouragement and support they need to weather difficult storms and make it through to the other side.

We hope to see you there!

Taste of Volunteering

By: Darryl Evans

Experiencing a Taste of Volunteering while serving for the Taste of Mississippi is a one of kind experience. As a volunteer, I get a chance to experience delicious food, live music, deeply discounted wares from the silent auction, and a night full of fun all while supporting a cause close to my heart. Many of us volunteers have been volunteering for over 5 years and when it's over we are anxious for the next year's event. We continue to keep coming back because of the love we have for Stewpot. We just enjoy being a part of something so meaningful. Not only is volunteering important to us, but the Stewpot staff make us feel as if we are wanted and needed. They treat us as if we are a part of their everyday family. I personally feel like me volunteering helps to make the Taste of Mississippi event a night to remember for all who come. So, this is why I take the time out of my busy and sometimes hectic schedule to come and lend a helping hand and I'm sure that my volunteer cohorts feel the same way. Thanks to the Taste of Mississippi, I have a place where I can lend a hand to some great people of faith and fulfill my purpose to be who I believe God wants me to be daily; A servant to His Kingdom.



From the volunteers to You who want to have an evening of great food, great people, great music, and do it all for a great cause – We Invite YOU to Blue Cross & Blue Shield Taste of Mississippi 2019. See you there!

Taste of Mississippi Also Helps the Kids

By: T'Kelah Smith

The 32nd annual **Blue Cross & Blue Shield Taste of Mississippi - a Benefit for Stewpot Community Services, Inc.: Homegrown Hunger Relief** event is quickly approaching, and Stewpot's halls are bustling. As one of Stewpot's largest events, its purpose is to help the men women and children of Jackson and other surrounding areas. All of the money we raise through Blue Cross & Blue Shield Taste of Mississippi is vital part of our ability to perform our various ministries throughout the year. Money collected from this event trickles down into every part of the organization. This trickle-down effect includes and greatly benefits our children in the Afterschool Program.

Located on the Stewpot's main campus in a little blue house, you will find teachers and volunteers dedicated to educating Jackson's youth. Ranging from kindergarten to twelfth grade, this program is currently home to over 60 children from the surrounding area. The rooms are filled with the laughter and chatter of excited students and as you enter the front door, you are greeted with some of the warmest smiles and friendliest of hellos.

The student are pumped about education and care deeply about their communities. They want to not only see a change, but be the change. Fifth grader, Jay, says he wants to come back and help the place that helps him by volunteering when he gets older; others want to plant flowers and trees and help the homeless. The students have big dreams and Stewpot supports them on their journey to success.

The Afterschool Program helps with homework, encourages kids to have strong beliefs, and in some instances, provides simple companionship for those who would otherwise be at home alone. The ministry strives to make sure that every child is taken care of, but this can be difficult when supplies runs low. Simple school supplies such as pencils and paper can run out in no time and without the proper funds the children will go without.

Community involvement help ministries like this one thrive. Your support is needed and it's as simple as purchasing one ticket to the Taste of Mississippi event.

So, what are you waiting for??? The Kids are waiting!!!



**WHEN SCHOOL IS OUT,
CAMP IS IN!**

Summer Camp is almost HERE! For seven weeks, we are expecting to host approximately 250 campers who will get the opportunity to experience a vacation filled with recreation, academics and creative activities.

Please consider giving a camper a summer vacation that will make a lifetime impression. A sponsorship is only **\$350** per camper.

Mail all Summer Camp contributions to: Stewpot Summer Camp 2019
Attention: Michelle' Bingham | P. O. Box 3691 | Jackson, MS 39207

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