

SPOTLIGHT ON fate

..... Story by JACQUELYN DOBRINSKA | Photo by PAUL M. HOWEY

Nonprofit organizations throughout Asheville and the surrounding area nourish the people within our communities, caring for those in need, protecting our historic heritage, educating young and old, and nurturing our cultural soul. Every month, The Laurel brings you some of the stories behind these agencies.

By most measures, Asheville is a wealthy town—rich with beauty, loaded with adventure and rolling in opportunities for merrymaking. Each night offers new pleasures, from amazing food at great restaurants to entertainment of every genre, tempo, and taste. Beneath the roar of celebration, however, is a softer, disquieting hum made by a chorus of individuals, unwilling participants in the solemn song of hunger.

Hunger is a very real problem in Western North Carolina. Roughly 1 in 13 individuals, many of them children, are food insecure, lacking continuous access to the most basic food needs. And it's not just the homeless who don't know where their next meal is coming from. According to MANNA FoodBank, more than a third of food insecure people have at least one working adult in the household.

"The situation of poverty happens," says Josh Stack, director of FATE, an Asheville-based, organization that brings attention to various hunger-related issues while generating revenues to address them. "Many people are just one injury or sickness away from needing a local food bank," he adds. "That hunger happens in a country with so many resources is a shame."

Josh founded FATE (Funding America Through Entertainment) to harness the verve of entertainment, the power of the media, and the generosity of corporate giving to make a difference for those suffering from hunger.

The genius of the organization is the win-win-win situation created for the triad of partners: the entertainer, the business and the food bank. FATE matches touring performers with members of the business community whose philanthropic generosity is cross-promoted and cobranded with the event to attract media attention for both parties. In other words, the business gets exposure

for their donation, the food bank gets needed resources, and the artist gets the satisfaction of contributing to a great need while leaving a lasting legacy within the community.

FATE facilitated a partnership with Bruce Hornsby, employing his June 27th show at Pisgah Brewing Company to bring awareness to Luella's Bar-B-Que donation to MANNA FoodBank. Earlier in the

summer, FATE worked with the Tedeschi Trucks Band, who not only spoke about Oskar Blues' donation to MANNA FoodBank but also donated \$1 of each ticket to the cause.

"FATE helps make donation work for businesses," says Josh. "It's different than writing a check and handing it over. It's writing a check and having a full-scale media campaign." And that helps a business stand out from the crowd. It also inspires more corporate giving. Josh shares a recent exchange where one business gave \$1,000, inspiring its competitor to give \$6,000.

FATE's community-minded model has an efficiency that partners and Josh both appreciate. After years in the business—first creating a food drive campaign for Widespread Panic, and then as head of press relations for MANNA FoodBank—Josh is familiar with the struggles of fundraising. The FATE model goes where the people are, engages donations prior to the event, and creates a buzz around the fun. More fun means more funds, which means more food for the hungry. For \$8, about the cost of a beer at a show, a food bank, such as MANNA, can provide 25 meals, explains Josh.

"Hunger has a solution. It's about placing a priority on all of us instead of some of us. It's about how we give collectively... Even more, it's about interrupting poverty," he says.

FATE's next venture is Lockn' Festival, a four-day music event next month in Arlington, Virginia. "And maybe one day," Josh finishes, "a food drive at the Grammy's."

For more information about FATE and how you can help, visit supportfate.org.

