



Eats

Fall fun for a cause

BY K. REKA BADGER

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Niner heart

Niner Wine Estate lives up to its iconic hillside heart by hosting a gala dinner for Peoples' Self-Help Housing as the nonprofit celebrates 40 years of service on the Central Coast.

PHOTO BY K. REKA BADGER

All festivities on the Central Coast combine optimism, edible plenty, and a call to lend a hand to worthy causes. Area residents gathering to celebrate the joys of harvest are ready to have some fun, while helping to improve the lives of their neighbors.

Among Santa Maria's annual events is the Harvest Festival, slated for Oct. 16 at Growing Grounds Farm, and held to benefit Transitions-Mental Health Association (T-MHA), a nonprofit organization that helps teens and adults coping with mental illness.

Groove to live tunes performed by Jeff Pienack and his Cornshuckers, along with musical guests guaranteed to keep the jam going all afternoon.

"It's several guys having a good time," laughed Lesta Travis, Harvest Festival coordinator. "Jeff works with our Support Employment Program, and his wife manages the farm, so the event is dear to his heart."

When hunger strikes, dig into a delicious serving of barbecued chicken with all the fixings, and linger awhile in the shade beside the

T-MHA Farm Stand.

"Chef Mark Morrow, from Lompoc, is doing the whole meal," Travis explained. "He just pitched right in and helped so much with that.

"We're doing a green salad from the farm," she continued, "Spencer's Market donates the French bread, and Arne Hansen, from Solvang, always does aebleskivers."

Vegetables will be available at the T-HMA farm stand, so gather a variety of fresh produce for a homemade feast later on. Serve grilled veggies with a chilled bottle of 2009 Zingy, Buttonwood Farm Winery's zesty version of Sauvignon Blanc, or dish up a saucy ratatouille with a glass of CORE Wine Company's 2006 Hard Core (a blend of Mourvedre, Grenache, Syrah, and Cabernet Sauvignon).

Celebrating 40 years of service, Peoples' Self-Help Housing (PSHH) offers dinner with wine on Oct. 23 at Edwards Barn in Nipomo. Testa Catering will prepare the meal—from harvest salad and New York strip steak, to barbecued chicken and mashed potatoes loaded with sour cream, gouda, chives, bacon.

"Wines during dinner will be from along the Central Coast," said Annette Montoya, corporate communications manager for PSHH. "There are reds, whites, and rosés from different vendors."

Those who have donated wine include Cottonwood Canyon Winery, Alere Vineyards (in western Cuyama Valley), George Primbs (the eponymous label of a Santa Barbara eye-surgeon, philanthropist, wine collector, and winemaker), Wood Winery (based in San Luis Obispo), and Frolicking Frog Wines (located in Atascadero).

During the event, guests can enter their bids for silent and live auctions, featuring a variety of liquid treasures.

"We were lucky to secure some very nice donations," Montoya said. "Father Chuck Stacey and Dr. George Primbs have been instrumental."

"A couple of years ago," she continued, "we had a wine tasting event in Santa Maria with Michael Grace Winery and McKeon Phillips. We hope to establish this as an annual event, which should draw repeat interest and support."

On Saturday, Nov. 6, Niner Winery, in Paso Robles, hosts a gala dinner for PSHH prepared by Catering Unlimited. The meal includes Port poached pear salad; a choice of crispy duck confit, stuffed quail, or stuffed portabella mushroom; and for dessert, Kahlua chocolate truffle.

Wines poured will include award winners from Niner Wine Estate, such as Sauvignon Blanc, Syrah, Cabernet Sauvignon, and Barbera.

Although both the Oct. 23 and Nov. 6 events will feature auctions, the specifics of each had not been finalized by press time. However, Montoya was able to name some of the wines that would be up for bidding.

"There are several cases," she said, "and they include wines from Wildhorse Winery, Alma Rosa Winery, Firestone Vineyard, Domaine de Nizas, Cimarone, Fess Parker Winery, Curtis Winery, Foley Estates Vineyard, Longoria Wines, Talley Vineyards, and Harmony Cellars."

"We also have magnums from Baileyana, three-liter bottles from Zaca Mesa Winery and Buttonwood Farm Winery, and wines from Eberle and Ancient Peaks," she added.

The mission of PSHH is to provide affordable housing and programs leading to self-sufficiency for low-income families, seniors, and other special needs groups on California's Central Coast. Since 1970, the organization has developed more than 1,000 owner-built homes and 1,200 rental units, and completed upwards of 3,000 housing rehabilitation and home repairs.

Proceeds from these events benefit the Youth Education Enhancement Program, which offers after-school education for K-12th grade students. Programs focus on improving student literacy, polishing English and math skills, promoting high school graduation, and fostering parent participation.

Eat, drink, and support

The Transitions-Mental Health Association Harvest Festival takes place Saturday, Oct. 16, from noon to 4 p.m., at 820 W. Foster Road, Santa Maria. Barbecue tickets cost \$10 for adults, or \$5 for children 10 and younger. Purchase by phone at 540-6594 or visit the donation page at t-mha.org. All proceeds support Growing Grounds Farm. The farm stand is open Thursdays, noon to 6 p.m.

The Peoples' Self-Help Housing 40-year celebration event on Nov. 6 begins at 5:30 p.m. at Edwards Barn, on the corner of Willow and Pomeroy roads. Tickets cost \$100.

The Saturday, Nov. 6, celebration dinner begins at 5:30 p.m. at Niner Winery, 2400 Highway 46 West, Paso Robles. Tickets cost \$100. Proceeds benefit Peoples' Self-Help Housing.

Harvest is a time for digging into fresh edibles and celebrating life on the Central Coast. So join the fun, place a few bids, and enjoy the pleasure of doing a good deed.

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