



Soup bowls, in various stages of completion, are seen on a table at the Astoria Dragon Kiln.



Julie Soderberg, executive director of The Harbor, stands in a room of the Van Dusen Building, the new location for The Harbor. The space is currently being renovated. The Harbor hopes to have it completed by the end of the year.



Soup bowls line a table at the Astoria Dragon Kiln.

When community goes full circle

Story by MARILYN GILBAUGH
Photos by JOSHUA BESSEX

The Harbor is getting ready to dish up an evening full of music, entertainment, good food, conversations and libation, too — and, of course, the securing of a coveted soup bowl. On Saturday, May 16 get ready, get set, the Soup Bowl is back. Here comes the annual event where each guest peruses, then chooses for keeps a prized handcrafted soup bowls made by local artisans. Bowl selection, wine reception and the silent auction begin at 5:30 p.m. in Astoria at the Masonic Lodge, located at 1572 Franklin Ave. Dinner and the program follow at 6:30 p.m.

The 12th annual event is one of the year’s best examples of how a diverse community working together can collectively make a difference. The end goal: abolishing domestic

violence and sexual assault.

“The bowls, the survivors and the community: We’re a circle existing together to achieve our goals,” says Harbor Executive Director Julie Soderberg. “The Soup Bowl is an evening of celebrating those efforts.”

This is the event that sees guests waiting as the doors open — they know the drill. Prompt arrival offers the best chance to score a personal favorite among the one-of-a-kind bowls. Created by local potters, there isn’t a loser in the collection, making it a difficult choice. Each and every bowl has a distinct hand-formed personality, finished with a subtle glow from local organic glazes.

Seven potters created the bowls this year,

The Harbor’s 12th annual Soup Bowl event nourishes the community Saturday, May 16 in Astoria

the majority of which were fired in the area’s legendary anagama kiln, an ancient Japanese-style cave kiln. Aptly nicknamed The Dragon Kiln, the 100-foot-long beast-like kiln claims an uphill dominance and respect over an acre of what is revered as sacred ground in Astoria.

Clatsop Community College artist and teacher Richard Rowland is a quiet man with a devotion to giving back to his community. When his crew of potters agreed to supply soup bowls to the Harbor’s first Soup Bowl, it was important to Rowland that it be a community event. “Anybody can just hand over a bowl,” says Rowland. So for the past 12 years, volunteers have been a big part of the process.

This year, four and a half cords of wood were gathered. Next, a rotating crew watched over and fed the dragon’s 2400-degree appetite, 24/7, for close to five days. “Making the bowls is energy that comes from the community. From start to finish, there is no other process that I know of that has so many community members helping to make one bowl,” says Rowland.

Besides the bowls, community donations for the event are evident everywhere. The hall is donated, as are all silent auction items. Soups are supplied by Silver Salmon, Astoria Coffeehouse & Bistro, Baked Alaska, Astoria Co-op Grocery, T.Paul’s Supper Club and Fulio’s Pastaria and Tuscan Steak House. Bread arrives from the Blue Scorchers and dessert finishes off the meal. There’s wine from the Astoria Co-op and beer from Fort George Brewery. The serving staff donates their time. And shuttling food and beverages to the event is the Harbor’s new, gently used 2008 Dodge Caravan, which the Harbor recently acquired in a discounted deal from Warrenton KIA.



Soup bowls line a table at the Astoria Dragon Kiln.

This year, the Soup Bowl’s keynote speaker is Danielle Tudor. In 1979, Tudor was barely 17 when she was raped and beaten by Richard Gillmore, Portland’s “Jogger Rapist.” Seven years later Gillmore was captured by police. But because Oregon’s six-year statute of limitations had run out, Tudor couldn’t press charges. Since that time, she and other Gillmore rape victims have been active advocates, lobbying the Oregon legislature for a lengthened statute.

During the Soup Bowl event, Cannon Beach Police Chief Jason Schermerhorn will also share some first-hand accounts of the helpful impact on and in the community when Harbor volunteers work with area police departments. “Many people in Clatsop County aren’t aware of the positive input they can have on something that, whether it’s direct or indirect, affects us all,” he says. “Harbor volunteers and financial donations from our community make a real difference.”

The Harbor is the only agency in the local area with a 24-hour hotline staffed 100 percent by volunteers. Providing ongoing services to clients and seeing approximately 50 new cases a month, there are four certified advocates on the Harbor staff. “Currently we have an average of 30 volunteers giving us 900 volunteer hours a month. That’s a huge increase. People are feeling good about the Harbor,” says Soderberg.

At the Harbor itself, things have never been busier. In the Harbor’s Déjà Vu Thrift

Shop, a gallery currently features art designed by two former victims of abuse. Carol and Kelly are using gallery space to show and sell their art. “They are using their work and their independence to inspire other victims. It’s an example of ‘If I can do it, you can do it,’” Soderberg says. Carol has spent over 700 hours volunteering at the Harbor, and she was also last year’s Soup Bowl keynote speaker. “It’s so neat to watch a person come full circle,” says Soderberg.

With a building permit in hand, the Harbor is growing. “We’re remodeling a larger facility, the Van Dusen Building, which Bob Poole donated to us,” Soderberg says. “We hope to have work completed by the end of the year. The new space, at 1010 Duane St., will allow us more room to help more people and provide our Déjà Vu Thrift Shop with much more retail space. We hope to become the Cargo of resale. It’s all about our community working together.” Continuing that circle of community, wood removed from the Van Dusen building’s demolition phase was carted up to feed the Dragon Kiln to fire the soup bowls.

Soup Bowl event tickets are available at Déjà Vu Thrift Shop, located at 1389 Duane St. in Astoria. The \$50 tickets sell out fast and with good reason.

“We exist to make our world a better place,” says Soderberg.

“Nourishing our community,” adds Rowland, “from bowls to survivors and back again, is a noble thing.”

‘From start to finish, there is no other process that I know of that has so many community members helping to make one bowl.’



CCC ceramics instructor and artist Richard Rowland grabs a piece of wood to burn in the Astoria anagama kiln as part of the firing process for the bowls. The wood was pulled from the Van Dusen Building during the remodel of the new Harbor site.

Soup Bowl

5:30 p.m. Saturday, May 16

Masonic Temple,
1572 Franklin Ave., Astoria

\$50 tickets available at

Déjà Vu Thrift Shop

1389 Duane St., Astoria

503-325-3426