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**Charlotte Wine & Food Weekend  
Selects Five Charities to “Nourish Mecklenburg County Youth”**

CHARLOTTE, NC -- The Charlotte Wine & Food Weekend will be held April 21 – 24, 2010 and five charities have been selected as the beneficiaries, based on the vital functions they provide to the Charlotte community. The Weekend has grown into one of the Southeast’s largest wine events, and has raised more than \$3 million for local charities, making it one of the largest charitable giving organizations in the area. The Weekend gave more than \$540,000 in grants to the beneficiaries chosen in 2008.

The five charities benefitting from the Weekend’s fundraising efforts center on the theme “Nourishing Mecklenburg County Youth.” As a group, these charities nurture the “whole child,” (body, mind and spirit) by focusing on such issues as education, child abuse and neglect, homelessness, and hunger. The Weekend’s beneficiaries are:

**Children’s Theatre of Charlotte  
Professional Theatre for Youth Audiences**

Children’s Theatre serves 320,000 children annually providing drama education and quality theatre. With recent cuts in art funding at programs within Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools, the Theatre provides the only exposure for an overwhelming majority of children in our community. Funds would be used for outreach programs and 12 productions. Currently, Theatre ticket sales cover only 55% of production costs.

**Council for Children’s Rights  
The Leading Voice for Children – Abuse and Neglect Advocacy Program**

Funds would be used for salaries for four children’s advocates, including three attorneys in the Abuse & Neglect Services Program. Each advocate serves 75 children per year, and services include finding homes, securing medical and mental health treatment, and developing individual educational and future plans. The Council serves as the leading voice for abused and neglected children.

**Johnson & Wales University  
Scholarships and Career Development**

Funds would be used for 15 scholarships of \$2,500 each per year for the two-year program at the culinary school for 15 Mecklenburg County low-income high school seniors. Scholarships will be based on financial need, academic achievement and volunteer participation.

**Second Harvest Food Bank of Metrolina  
Backpack Project for Underprivileged Kids**

Overall demand for food has increased 450% this year and teachers report that backpack food is often the only food in the home for the child during the weekend. Funds would be used to distribute nutritious food during the school year. The project distributes 5,000 backpacks on Friday afternoons with a predetermined combination of quality foods. Teachers have reported a positive change in behavior and attentiveness on Mondays for children in the program.

**Workforce Initiative for Supportive Housing (part of Crisis Assistance Ministry)  
Homeless Children Focus**

The W.I.S.H. Program is a permanent supportive “rapid re-housing” solution for homeless working families with children. The program has served 60 families (including 90 children) during its first 18 months of existence. Funds would be used for one new social worker for three years to serve 18 families (approximately 36 children) through a three-year Affordable Housing & Steps-to-Empowerment-to-Independence Model, a national pilot program.

“The charities we’ve selected contribute basic needs, like food and housing, but also introduce arts to children that need exposure to the kindness and creativity of our whole community,” said Pat Phillips, Charlotte Wine & Food Weekend Board Chairman. Phillips, a retired senior executive with Bank of America, is a longtime supporter of the Charlotte arts community, serving as incoming Director of the Charlotte Mecklenburg Arts & Science Council. “Our events attract world-renowned winemakers and connoisseurs that bring a level of expertise unparalleled in Charlotte which, in turn, supports our local restaurants and wine shops.”

The April festivities begin with Vintner Dinners, where Charlotte’s most noted restaurants are paired with the world’s best winemakers, held at various restaurants and locations in Charlotte. The Weekend will also be highlighted by Friday’s casual event - Big Bottles & Blues, the largest in attendance. Traditional events including the Wine Education Series, Sommelier Tasting and Connoisseur Tasting will precede a culminating celebration with the Grand Live Auction and Gala on Saturday evening. Tickets will be available online after the first of the year at [www.charlottewineandfood.com](http://www.charlottewineandfood.com).

Since its inception in 1989, the Charlotte Wine & Food Weekend has grown into one of the Southeast’s largest wine events and has raised more than \$3 million for local charities. Held in the spring of every even-numbered year, the weekend draws notable winemakers from around the world and pairs them with Charlotte’s top chefs for three days of fun and educational events. For more information, visit us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter at CLTWineandFood. Check the web site for tickets at [www.charlottewineandfood.com](http://www.charlottewineandfood.com) or call (704) 338-9463.