

Chippewa Valley foundation revives Taste for Education event

Taste fest and auction set for April 27 at the Mirage



Chippewa Valley Schools' Chippewa Valley Educational Foundation will host A Taste for Education event for the first time since 2019 on April 27. Pictured is a display from Randazzo Fresh Market at a prior Taste for Education event. Randazzo is scheduled to participate in the taste fest again this year.

By **NICOLE TUTTLE** |

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The Chippewa Valley Educational Foundation is hoping to fund projects that will bring a taste of classroom innovation to teachers by reviving a popular fundraiser.

The foundation's Taste for Education taste fest and auction is making a comeback for the first time since 2019 this year. It will be held April 27 at 6 p.m. at the Mirage Banquet Hall, located at 16980 18 Mile Road in Clinton Township. Tickets are \$55 and available by contacting 586-723-2240. Raffles and auctions will also be available.

Those who attend the event can visit approximately 24 entrée tasting stations and desserts provided by Macomb County restaurants, caterers and markets. A few of the many participating businesses include Zuccaro's Banquets and Catering, Vince and Joe's Gourmet Markets, Mirage, Randazzo Fresh Market, Nino Salvaggio International Marketplace, and Cake Mitten Bake Shop.

Christopher Gura, foundation president, said due to COVID-19, for the past few years the foundation has conducted online auctions instead of the taste fest. The foundation decided to return to an in-person taste fest for 2023.

"We really wanted to get back to an in-person format. We are excited," Gura said.

The Chippewa Valley Educational Foundation's mission is to help achieve and maintain an extra margin of excellence for the school district, by utilizing private resources, fundraising and gifts to supplement traditional school funding. The foundation, originally founded in 1987, is nonprofit and tax exempt. It is dedicated to fostering new and creative programs designed to enhance education in the district.

Proceeds from the taste fest event will benefit the students and programs of Chippewa Valley Schools, via the foundation's teacher mini-grant program. The classroom grants are awarded to teachers at all grade levels in the form of mini-grants, generally to undertake unique classroom projects.

Gura said the foundation doesn't have a specific fundraising goal for the taste fest this year, but is hoping to perhaps reach pre-pandemic levels. The foundation also fundraises for the mini-grants with a Giving Tuesday fundraising campaign, as well as reaching out to donors in the fall. He said that the foundation is potentially considering another event in the fall as well.

"We do not have a goal per say. We are just trying to increase the fundraising as much as possible. In the past we were able to give teacher mini-grants in aggregate of \$60,000," Gura said.

Money raised through this year's taste fest would fund the 2023-24 school year teacher mini grants.

"We are already done for the 2022-23 school year. We just finished awarding them. I think they apply in the late fall and then a decision is made in early January. And then once we have that we go to, specifically at each school, to award it to the teacher at the school," Gura said.

The foundation reviews teacher mini-grant applications through a committee process, taking into account the number and types of requests as well as the funds available.

Gura said once decisions are made, the principals of the teachers' schools are informed. Next, foundation board members arrange to go to the schools to announce and grant the awards to the chosen teachers.

As to the types of teacher mini-grant applications that catch the eyes of committee members at the foundation, Gura said this varies greatly, from things such as STEM programs and science kits to classroom reading material.

"It is all over the board. It depends. We have done electronics, iPads for certain classes, alternate seating for some classrooms," Gura said.