

Bounty & Soul gears up for Hunger Action Month

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SPECIAL TO THE BLACK MOUNTAIN NEWS

September marks an important month for those passionate about combating hunger, both nationally and locally.

The national Feeding America organization sponsors its annual Hunger Action Month during the month of September. The initiative inspires hunger relief organizations to team up to raise food, funds and awareness to help combat hunger in local communities.

Local business are partnering with local non profit Bounty & Soul to help with the effort.

34,990 (15.4 percent of the population) people in Buncombe County are food insecure, or unsure of the source of their next meal, according to Feeding America's Map the Meal Gap in 2014.

As a partner agency of MANNA Food-Bank, Bounty & Soul is excited about the local events planned during the month of September, said Karla Gardner with Bounty & Soul.

Last year the organization embraced Hunger Action Month in a small way and is pleased to gain support of more local businesses this year.

"Any way we can get word out about what hunger looks like in Western North Carolina and how individuals can help our organization is key for us," said Gardner. The community plays a central role in our local hunger fight, whether that is funding from business or individual donations or other groups, she said.

One business joining in the hunger effort is Mellie Mac's Garden Shop and u-WINE'd, hosting the Purple Possum Bene-fest on Saturday, Sept. 10 from 3-9 p.m. The idea for the event formed when Mellie Mac, owner, commented to a friend that she was tired of all same red, white and blue colors for festivals. She



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Participants gather produce at one of the five weekly Bounty & Soul free food markets.

wanted to see a new color like purple, she said.

"I wanted to festival with purple, and we started joking about a purple possum festival," Mac said.

Soon after, she learned about the high number of families right in the community struggling to meet food needs, she said. "I am displeased with how the government is addressing food insecurity. What I want is see is more nutrition education and awareness and teaching people how to grow their own healthy," she said.

Mac is thrilled with the work of Bounty & Soul and the ways they address food insecurity.

"I love what Bounty & Soul is doing, and this is a small way I can get involved in their cause," Mac said.

The organization's five weekly free food markets provide healthy food along with nutrition awareness and health and wellness resources for those who may not have access to these resources. Market sites include a low income senior living facility; a non-profit daycare center; and area residents at St. James Episcopal Church, in the Flat Creek Community, and in Swannanoa community surrounding Creative Village Daycare.

Mac's Purple Possum Bene-fest event will donate 15 percent of all proceeds to support the work of Bounty & Soul.