



NORTHEAST IOWA
FOOD BANK

empty**bowls**

Northeast Iowa Food Bank to Host Annual Empty Bowls Event March 27; Tickets on Sale

WATERLOO, Iowa (March 5, 2026) - The Northeast Iowa Food Bank (NEIFB) is gearing up for the annual Empty Bowls event taking place on March 27, 2026, at the Bien VenU Event Center in Cedar Falls. The event is the Food Bank's largest fundraiser of the year, bringing the community together to help fight food insecurity across northeast Iowa.

From 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m., attendees will have the opportunity to learn more about hunger in our community while enjoying a soup buffet, participating in live and silent auctions, and bidding on desserts for their table during the **inaugural NEIFB Dessert Auction**. Each



guest will also take home a handcrafted bowl as a keepsake and reminder of the mission to ensure everyone has access to food.

Empty Bowls is part of a national movement where communities gather over a simple meal of soup and bread to raise awareness and funds to help fight food insecurity. Across the Northeast Iowa Food Bank's 16-county service area, more than 45,000 people currently face food insecurity, including over 14,000 children. Support from events like Empty Bowls helps the Food Bank provide food to children, families, and seniors when they need it most.

"Empty Bowls brings people together around a simple meal with a powerful purpose," said Barbara Prather, NEIFB Executive Director. "The generosity shown through this event strengthens our ability to serve across northeast Iowa with dignity and compassion. It is also a meaningful way to support our Capacity Campaign as we renovate and expand our facility to better meet the growing need."



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The soups this year will be provided by Bien VenU Event Center, with bread generously donated by Cedar Falls Brown Bottle and Olive Garden. Isle Casino Hotel Waterloo and Try Pie are providing pies and cakes for the inaugural NEIFB Dessert Auction. The Northeast Iowa Food Bank greatly appreciates their generous contributions in helping make this event possible.



This year's theme is **Bloom with Purpose: Growing Young Leaders. Fighting Food Insecurity.** It highlights the importance of investing in the next generation of community leaders. Guests will hear from young people who are already stepping forward to serve, lead, and inspire others to make a difference.

"This year's theme recognizes the important role young people play in building a stronger community," said Abby Turpin, Director of Development, Marketing, and Communications for NEIFB. "During the government shutdown in November, we saw firsthand how quickly families can feel the ripple effects of uncertainty, and we also saw young people step up by showing their care through financial support and volunteering, giving in any way they could. We are excited to showcase that commitment at this year's event as young leaders continue to carry this mission forward."

Tickets are on sale now for \$40 per individual or \$280 for a table of eight. College students can receive an individual ticket at a discounted rate of \$20 by using discount code STUDENT at checkout and presenting a valid student ID at event check-in.

Purchase tickets here: <https://events.handbid.com/auctions/empty-bowls-2026>

Thank you to our **Gold Sponsors** of Empty Bowls 2026:



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- Conagra
- First Maxfield Mutual
- Lincoln Savings Bank

Thank you to our **Silver Sponsor** of Empty Bowls 2026:

- Hydrite

NEIFB is grateful for the sponsors and supporters of this year's Empty Bowls event. Without the generosity of local businesses and community members, this event would not be possible. Thank you for standing with us in the fight against hunger. We cannot wait to see our community supporters at Empty Bowls 2026.

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About NEIFB: The Northeast Iowa Food Bank (NEIFB) is a proud member of Feeding America® and the Iowa Food Bank Association. NEIFB distributes nutritious food and grocery products to over 127 nonprofit organizations and programs that help families and individuals facing food insecurity. Last year, the Food Bank distributed over 8.6 million meals within its 16-county service area. For over 40 years, the Food Bank has alleviated hunger and provided nutrition education through its eight programs: Agency Distribution, BackPack, Cedar Valley Food Pantry, Kids Café, Mobile Food Pantry, School Market, Senior Nutrition, and Summer Feeding. To learn more, visit neifb.org and follow us on social media.