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- News
- Events
- Places
- Marketplace
- Q&A
- Volunteer

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## Crowns for a Cause: Pagents Help Food Bank for Westchester

Miss Westchester and Miss Hudson Valley Pageants sponsor a benefit for the Food Bank for Westchester at Vintage Restaurant in White Plains.

By Christine Chagaris | Email the author | 5:39am | Print

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Those dining at [Vintage Bar & Restaurant](#) in White Plains Wednesday evening not only enjoyed a delicious meal—but also helped feed Westchester's hungry, and crown the next People's Choice Award beauty queen.

The restaurant donated 10 percent of each meal sold that night to [The Miss Westchester and Miss Hudson Valley Pageant's](#) "Dine Out to End Hunger," event—a benefit for the Food Bank for Westchester, the recipient of the pageant's 2012 People's Choice Award fundraiser.

"The People's Choice Award is one of six pageant awards—it has no bearing upon who wins the actual pageant—it's given to a contestant who wins the most money for charity," said pageant Executive Director Dee van Eyck, 52, of Larchmont.

The People's Choice Award is the only other award—besides the main award given to the pageant winners—that has a crown of its own.

Miss Westchester 2011—Christina DeLeon, 25, a Yorktown Heights resident—and Miss Westchester Teen 2011—Samantha Gold, 18 of Armonk—greeted guests along with contestants from the upcoming 2012 pageant: Michelle Mantey, 26, of Elmsford and Samantha Coccocza, 18, of Briarcliff Manor.

Restaurant patrons got to vote for their favorite contestant, with the donation amount from their bill going toward the contestant's tally for the award. Pageant contestants will continue to raise money for the food bank by collecting \$1 per vote up to the 2012 Miss Westchester and Miss Hudson Valley Pageants—taking place Sunday, Sept. 4 at the [White Plains Performing Arts Center](#).

Co-Director Laura Giannone and van Eyck chose to focus on this charity as they felt that it was important to donate locally.

"The current economic situation really complicates the problem of hunger," said van Eyck. "About 200,000 Westchester residents—approximately 20 percent of the county's total population—don't have adequate meals or are in danger of going hungry."

She added that about half that number is seniors, and a third are kids under 18.

"We wanted to reach out and try to help right that wrong," said van Eyck.

The Food Bank for Westchester was established in 1988 and is located in Millwood. It distributes food to 227 organizations in Westchester, such as shelters and food pantries. Amid growing demand for its service, the food bank will be moving to Elmsford this fall into a larger headquarters.

"For every dollar donated to the food bank, we can purchase four dollars worth of nutritious food to feed children and families who are hungry," said Christina Rohatynsky, the food bank's executive director.

DeLeon was pleased with the pageant's charity choice.

"We visited the food bank last week with other people from the pageant," she said. "We saw first hand what they do, so us raising money for them is huge because they are really helping to try and combat hunger. This has really raised my awareness as to how prevalent hunger is."

Gold was also keen to bring attention to the problem of hunger in Westchester.

"Just seeing that there is a lack of food in the county really hits home for us," she said. "It feels so good to help."

Declan Farrell of White Plains—owner and manager of Vintage Restaurant, a pageant sponsor—was happy to lend a hand.

"We like being involved in events relating to White Plains, and helping worthy causes such as this one as well," he said.

The Miss Westchester and Miss Hudson Valley Pageants are part of the Miss USA Pageant system, which also counts Miss Universe as one of its contests.

The inaugural pageant took place last year, and this year is the first time a Miss Hudson Valley will be crowned. White Plains Patch's very own editor, Dina Sciortino, is serving as a Special Awards Media Judge for the pageant's Photogenic and Style Awards.

For more information on Food Bank for Westchester, visit [www.foodbankforwestchester.org](http://www.foodbankforwestchester.org) or call 914-923-1100. For pageant information, visit [www.westchesterpageants.com](http://www.westchesterpageants.com).

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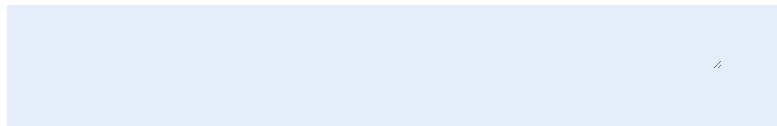
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