
Santa Maria Celebrates the Art of BBQ to Support Local Foster and High-needs Children

■ On Saturday, June 26th, 2010 the Family Care Network will host its 2nd annual Wild West BBQ Bash, a family-friendly event benefiting foster and high-needs children and families on the Central Coast. The event will run from 11:00am to 4:00pm at Preisker Park at 330 Hidden Pines Way in Santa Maria. All are invited to enjoy live entertainment and world-class BBQ as dozens of BBQ teams from Santa Maria and around the state compete for the Wild West crown in this competition sanctioned by the International Barbeque Cookers Association! Last year's competition included seasoned competitors such as Harry Soo, of "Slap Yo Daddy BBQ" featured on TLC's hit show "Pit Masters" along with local rookies such as Jim Leuthold of Central Coast Smokers and Ron Fleenor of R&R Catering in Santa Maria. Central Coast BBQ enthusiasts and seasoned pros alike are encouraged to join the competition this year by contacting the Family Care Network at 805-781-3535 or Lburleson@fcni.org. The BBQ teams will compete in six categories including: chicken, beef brisket, pork ribs,

pork shoulder, "People's Choice", and of course, tri-tip. This year's exciting addition of the People's Choice award will afford guests the opportunity to taste and vote on world class BBQ prepared by top-notch competitors! Admission to the event is free and funds earned through BBQ tasting tickets and food & beverage sales benefit the Family Care Network. "People's Choice" BBQ tasting tickets will be sold for \$2 each both at the event and prior to the event at any Central Coast Farm Supply location.

The Family Care Network has partnered with the City of Santa Maria Recreation & Parks Department to host this unique day of family fun. In addition to the exciting sport of BBQ, the Wild West BBQ Bash will feature local musicians and performance groups along with family activities such as face painting, cultural displays, balloon animals and more. This competition is dedicated to the promotion of BBQ as a culinary art and sport as well as the historical preservation of the Santa Maria Style BBQ which brought the Latino and Caucasian settlers of California's Central Coast together. The event celebrates the unique relationship of the Caucasian ranchers and Latino vaqueros in the 19th century through culinary efforts such as Santa Maria Style BBQ and the ongoing community established by these groups. The Wild West BBQ Bash is also an opportunity for local families to celebrate their cultural heritage that is the fabric of our community and to preserve the historical traditions that are unique to the Central Coast. By integrating performances, cultural displays and unique hands-on experiences, the children served by FCNI and those in the surrounding community will have the opportunity to embrace and celebrate their own diversity.

Additionally, in celebration of the art of BBQ and our community's cultural diversity, this event will provide a new way for the Santa Maria community to support local foster and high-needs children and families. By increasing community awareness through the Wild West BBQ Bash, FCNI is able to recruit volunteers, mentors, tutors, donors and foster families from the 2,000 – 3,000 people who are expected to attend. All of these benefits help ensure the long term stability and support for the children and families FCNI serves. The fundraiser comes at a crucial time for the children of the Central Coast, as the Family Care Network, a private children and

families services provider for over 22 years, is facing a \$300,000 deficit due to recent state budget cuts. Primary program funding sources are often limited in scope, covering only direct services and limited basic needs (shelter, clothing, medical expenses, etc.) of those we serve. It is our goal as an agency to provide services that go beyond primary program funding in order to provide a sense of normalcy and security to the children and families in our care. These needs can include anything from music lessons for a young child to helping a foster youth transition from system dependence to adult independence. With over 1,800 children and families served annually, there are many needs that would go unmet if the agency did not receive unrestricted dollars. These funds are critical to the Family Care Network's mission of enhancing the lives of the Central Coast's foster and high-needs children and families.

The community's support is more important than ever as the agency tackles an increasing need to provide safe and loving homes and therapeutic services for local children and youth in need. For information about the Wild West BBQ Bash or volunteering with the Family Care Network to serve local foster and high-needs children and families, please visit www.fcni.org or call (805) 781-3535. ■

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