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Tampa Bay tourism industry fights hunger in the community

"Tourism Gives Back" food-raiser makes 35,000 meals for local families

TAMPA (June 16, 2017) – Thousands of Tampa Bay-area families will have food on their tables this summer thanks to Tampa Bay's tourism industry, which rallied a record number of members at Amalie Arena June 15 to create food packages and support Feeding Tampa Bay.

More than 250 representatives from Tampa Bay hotels, attractions and other groups gathered on the floor of Amalie Arena for "Tourism Gives Back," the annual "food-raiser" organized by Visit Tampa Bay.

While their supporters cheered them on, a record 26 teams of five raced the clock and each other to pack food packages to support families that need help with food this summer.

"For the third year, Tampa Bay's tourism industry has come out in tremendous numbers to support families in our area who need help putting food on the table," said Santiago Corrada, president and CEO of Visit Tampa Bay. "We know that food insecurity is a very serious issue in our community and we are proud to do our part to help solve the problem."

At the start of "Tourism Gives Back," Feeding Tampa Bay President Thomas Mantz reminded the participants that food insecurity is more common than they might think: "In all likelihood, you know somebody who is getting food from a food bank."

In addition to creating food packages, 20 "Tourism Gives Back" teams put their creativity to work designing and building sculptures entirely from canned food their organizations donated. More than 9,300 cans went into the creations, which including several pirate ships, a jet plane and giant logo by Tampa International Airport, and a "Despicable Me" minion by AAA (Auto Club Group).

The winners for "Tourism Gives Back" were:

Fastest Team to Create 200 Food Packages: Epicurean Hotel

Most Creative Can Sculpture: Hilton Tampa Downtown (image attached)

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Best Overall Can Sculpture: Tampa Marriott Waterside Hotel & Marina (image attached)

Most Money Raised: Hilton Tampa Downtown

Total value of food packets plus cash raised: \$29,185

Photos with captions from the event are here.

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About Visit Tampa Bay

The hip, urban heart of Florida's Gulf coast beats in Tampa Bay. Visit Tampa Bay encourages adventurous travelers to unlock sun, fun and culture in Florida's most diverse travel destination. We are a not-for-profit company that works with nearly 800 industry and corporate partners to tell the world the story of Tampa Bay. Treasure awaits.

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