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Tourism Builds Big for Tampa Bay

"Tourism Gives Back" draws record team turn-out to benefit Feeding Tampa Bay

TAMPA (July 18, 2018) – Thousands of Tampa Bay-area families will have food on their tables this year thanks to Tampa Bay's tourism industry, which rallied a record number of teams and raised a record amount of cash this year for "Tourism Gives Back," Visit Tampa Bay's annual food-raiser with Feeding Tampa Bay.

Twenty-six teams from companies across Tampa Bay gathered at Amalie Arena July 18 to put their creativity – and their steady hands -- to work designing and building sculptures built entirely from donated canned food.

This year's structure contest challenged teams to build bigger and more elaborate structures than in years past. More than 11,600 cans went into the creations, which included a Sponge Bob Squarepants-themed pineapple, a replica of Amalie Arena, a giant Etch-A-Sketch, and 10-foot-tall Tampa Theatre sign.

Along with the donated food, teams raised cash, contributing to a total donation to Feeding Tampa Bay of \$35,000 -- a 20 percent increase over 2017 and enough to provide 350,000 meals. McKibbon Hospitality, one of the event's sponsors, was honored as the single-largest cash contributor, having raised \$2,500.

"I'm extremely proud of our tourism community for coming out in such strong numbers to support those living with food insecurity," said Santiago C. Corrada, President and CEO of Visit Tampa Bay. "We have such an incredibly generous tourism and hospitality industry. Great job."

This year's event included several new teams, including Mise en Place restaurant, MOR-TV, and the Straz Center for the Performing Arts.

"In year four, it's amazing how much the quality and creativity of structures has grown," said Thomas Mantz, CEO of Feeding Tampa Bay. He reminded the participants that, while they were having fun, the afternoon's business was also serious: "The gifts that you give us today, these are meals that will end up on someone's table."

The winners for "Tourism Gives Back" were:

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Most Creative: Tampa Bay Lightning

Judge's Favorite: Straz Center for the Performing Arts

Best Use of Labels: Hilton Tampa Downtown

Structural Ingenuity: Renaissance Tampa International Plaza Hotel

*Photos from the event are here: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/ajydMnwPNN4BehPn7>

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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 corporation that works with 800 partners to tell the world the story of Tampa Bay.

Treasure awaits.

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