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RECORD NUMBER OF MAINE'S BEST RESTAURANTS AND MIXOLOGISTS SLATED FOR 5TH ANNUAL "TASTE OF THE NATION®"

June 27th benefit expected to raise \$100,000 to fight childhood hunger throughout Maine

Portland, ME – Dozens of Maine's best chefs, mixologists, top-shelf spirits and premium wine selections will be showcased on June 27th during Share Our Strength - Portland, Maine's 5th Annual "Taste of the Nation®" benefit, the organization's largest such Maine benefit to date.

This year, event organizers plan to raise \$100,000 for four of the most effective anti-hunger organizations working to feed hungry children in Maine. Since its 2006 launch, Taste of the Nation's Portland presence has raised and granted more than \$154,000. In a state where nearly 60,000 children under 18 are food insecure, the donations continue to make a profound impact. This year's grant recipients will be Preble Street Teen Center, Good Shepherd Food Bank, Cultivating Community, and East End Kids Katering (PROP) – all committed to ending hunger and poverty among Maine children.

The seaside fundraiser will be held at the Leavitt & Parris Tent Pavilion on the grounds of the Ocean Gateway International Marine Terminal in Portland, on Sunday, June 27th from 3:00 p.m. (for VIP ticket holders) or 4:30 p.m. (for General Admission ticket holders) until 8:00 p.m. (All tickets may be purchased at www.strength.org/portlandme.)

This year's Taste of the Nation event is unique, both in terms of the planned size and scope of the event, and the strength of early ticket sales, according to John Woods, committee chair of Share Our Strength - Portland, Maine. "Of 350 tickets available for Taste this year, we're encouraged that just 40 remain with three weeks leading up to the event," he said. "Mainers are known for their generosity, and the enthusiasm and support we're already seeing for this year's event is a prime example."



This year's Taste of the Nation event in Portland is billed as the season's hottest food and wine event, in large part due to the 26 restaurants participating from around the state, including Primo, Lily Bistro and Francine Bistro, as well as Portland favorites such as Hugo's, Cinque Terre, Fore Street, Evangeline and Back Bay Grill. The event will introduce a "food and wine tasting" theme, to feature over 50 wine selections geared toward complementing every food item to be served throughout the evening. Over 20 spirits, liqueurs and beer selections will be served at the 21+ event, and eight of Maine's best mixologists will create signature cocktails using top-shelf spirits.

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Portland-based “DJ Jon” will play tunes from 3:00 – 6:00 p.m., followed by live music by “Now is Now,” viewed as “one of Maine’s finest rock bands” by *Good Times* magazine.



Photo courtesy of Michael Barriault

This year’s auction, always a highlight of the event, will feature dozens of items ranging from surprise culinary packages from top Maine chefs, overnight stays with top-tier hotels like Boston’s Ritz-Carlton, and an Akari Day Spa package, to JetBlue round-trip tickets anywhere in the continental U.S., dinners for four at headline Maine restaurants, and Red Sox, Boston Bruins and Portland Pirates tickets. Stonewall Kitchen also will offer a culinary package of two tickets to its state-of-the-art cooking school in York plus an overnight stay at the nearby York Harbor Inn, along with a generous sampling of its specialty food products. A notable new addition to the auction this year is an ongoing raffle for a two-year lease on a brand-new 2010 BMW 328xi. Raffle tickets are available at www.strength.org/portlandme or by emailing jwoods@sosportland.org, and also will be available during the June 27th event.

An added draw of this year’s event will be the “Bill Dodge BMW VIP Reception” and tent for VIP ticket holders. Held from 3:00 – 4:30 p.m., the VIP reception will feature exclusive creations from Stonewall Kitchen, Miyake, and Browne Trading Company, as well as high-end cocktails, passed hors d’oeuvres from participating chefs, music and dancing, and private reserve auction items. All of the event’s food and beverage stations also will be open to VIP guests during this time, with special cooking demos to be offered by six of Maine’s award-winning chefs. The Bill Dodge BMW VIP Reception tent will remain open for VIP ticket holders throughout the day.

“Our Maine chefs are making national headlines for their talent and dedication to their craft,” noted Maine Governor John Baldacci. “It’s important to remember, though, that so many of them have been known for years for their true sense of philanthropy when it comes to supporting so many important charitable causes throughout our state.”

For further information, visit www.strength.org/portlandme/ and Share Our Strength - Portland, Maine’s Facebook page: http://bit.ly/SOS_FB

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About Taste of the Nation

Share Our Strength’s Taste of the Nation® is the nation’s premier culinary benefit dedicated to making sure no kid in America grows up hungry. Each spring, the nation’s hottest chefs and mixologists donate their time, talent and passion at more than 45 events across the United States and Canada, with one goal in mind: to raise the critical funds needed to end childhood hunger. Taste of the Nation is nationally sponsored by American Express, Sysco, Food Network, Brown-Forman Corporation and S.Pellegrino Sparkling Natural Mineral Water. Since 1988, Taste of the Nation has raised more than \$70 million. Funds raised in 2008 supported 156 organizations in the United States, Canada and abroad. To purchase tickets or to get involved, visit TasteOfTheNation.org.

About Share Our Strength

Share Our Strength® is the leading national organization working to make sure no kid in America grows up hungry. We weave together a net of community groups, activists and food programs to catch children at risk of hunger and ensure they have nutritious food where they live, learn and play. We work with the culinary industry to create engaging, pioneering programs like Share Our Strength’s Taste of the Nation®, Share Our Strength’s Great American Bake Sale®, Share Our Strength’s A Tasteful Pursuit®, Share Our Strength’s Great American Dine Out®, and Share Our Strength’s Operation Frontline®. Visit Strength.org.