



9th annual New Year's Eve Pickle Drop draws record crowd and food for others

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MOUNT OLIVE, NC—A record 2,000 people gathered at the Corner of Cucumber & Vine on New Year's Eve to watch a three-foot glowing pickle descend into 2008.

Those same people also helped provide 1,000 meals for hungry North Carolinians.

A canned food drive to benefit Food Bank of Central & Eastern North Carolina collected 1,180 pounds of food during the Pickle Drop. That translates, on average, into 1,000 meals.

Food donors received a chance to win door prizes from the Mt. Olive Pickle gift shop. The grand prize was a pool pickle similar to the one dropped for New Year's Eve, and a 14-year-old boy from Sandy Bottom won it.

“We were thrilled with the food drive,” said company spokesperson Lynn Williams. “We’ve always known our community to be a giving one, and this just affirms it.”

This was the first year Mt. Olive partnered with Food Bank for a food drive during the Pickle Drop, but the company has supported Food Bank for most of the hunger organization's 27-year history. In 2007, the company contributed 816,000 pounds of pickle products.

A nonprofit organization that provides food for hungry people in 34 counties in central and eastern North Carolina, Food Bank distributed more than two million pounds of food locally to Wayne and Duplin counties during the 2006-2007 fiscal year.

“Inviting Food Bank to work with us for the Pickle Drop just made sense for a lot of good reasons,” Ms. Williams said.

Mt. Olive Pickle Company's New Year's Eve Pickle drops 45 feet down the company's flagpole into a perfectly preserved redwood pickle tank, all at the stroke of 7 o'clock midnight. (In case you are wondering, 7 o'clock Eastern Standard Time is actually midnight Greenwich Mean Time.)

“This event really brings out families with children, as well as folks who enjoy celebrating the New Year a bit early,” Ms. Williams said. “We are *official*, we sing *Auld Lang Syne*, we shout Happy New Year! And then we all go home.

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“We had a terrific turnout this year, and the weather was perfect.”

The New Year’s Eve crowd included a mix of visitors and local residents (Mount Olive the community is home to less than 5,000 people.) The company awards pickles to the family that traveled the farthest to attend. The prize this year went to Brian and Mercedes Collins of Burbank, CA. Other contenders hailed from Missouri and New Mexico.

The event, which lasts for approximately one hour, features live music and free refreshments – including Mt. Olive whole Kosher Dills.

“We gave away more pickles than cookies,” Ms. Williams said.

First held in 1999 by a handful of Mt. Olive employees, the New Year’s Eve Pickle Drop went public in 2001 with about 250 people watching. Attendance has grown steadily over the years, and the 2006 event drew approximately 1,200. The 2008 event will be the company’s 10th.

“We are already thinking of ways to improve for 2008,” Ms. Williams said.

Mt. Olive Pickle was established by local business people in 1926. Today, the privately held company produces the second best-selling brand of pickles in the country with distribution in all 50 states.

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Contact: Lynn Williams, Community Relations
Mt. Olive Pickle Company, Inc.
919.581.3628
lwilliams@mtolivepickles.com
www.mtolivepickles.com

or

Christy Simmons, Manager of Public Relations
Food Bank of Central & Eastern North Carolina
919.865.3050
csimmons@foodbankcenc.org
www.foodbankcenc.org