

Student-made banners get word out about Culinary Celebration 2009

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Students and paint could be seen in every corner of the room on Monday night when more than a dozen volunteers gathered to paint banners in Lynn Barhart's garage.

All banners were for the annual Culinary Celebration.

The message is designed to get the word out and advertise the October Culinary Celebration. The Celebration is the biggest fundraising effort by the Carroll Education Foundation. The annual October event raised more than \$285,000 in 2008 that was used for education grants, student scholarships and an endowment fund.

According to Kacy Hankins, executive director of Carroll Education Foundation, banners have always been a part of the advertising efforts.

However this year a couple of CEF board members took the banners a step further. All were produced by student and parent volunteers.

School and Community Communication committee Chairwoman Sheila Halliman said that she thought that the students painting the banners as a group provided a good relationship building environment.

She said she believed in community branding and by allowing the students to put their own personal touch on the banners they were contributing to something that would ultimately help them.

"This is a great tool for building awareness of CEF and our annual fundraiser n The Culinary Celebration," Hankins said. "Students read banners. It's a great marketing tool for us because it's a unique way to spread the word on CEF and it draws attention because it was created by students. Parents will see the banners when they drop off their kids, teachers and administrators will be reminded of the event and kids will ask their friends about it. Word of mouth is a powerful tool."

Halliman said the students spent about three hours painting in banners. Not only did the students have an opportunity to build their relationships it also served as time to educate them and what CEF was and how they were helping their schools.

"They have a greater understanding," Halliman said.

The project was open to all ages and the mood throughout the event was light and fun.

"By doing this, we let the kids become more involved in a project that will ultimately benefit them," Hankins said. "It's a great lesson for them in community responsibility and school pride."

The 11 banners will be hung in each of the 11 Carroll schools by student volunteers and parents prior to the start of school this year.

This year's Culinary Celebration will take place on October 4 from 6 to 10 p.m. at the Hyatt Regency DFW. It will feature chefs from more than 30 area restaurants as well as silent and live auction items. For information on the event or to buy tickets visit www.southlakecef.org