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Cedar Key Woman's Club celebrates its 32nd Annual Spaghetti Dinner



Cedar Key Woman's Club President Jane Moore welcomes guests to the dinner.

Story and Photos

By Jeff M. Hardison © Feb. 11, 2018 @ 7:58 p.m.

CEDAR KEY -- Every seat was filled Saturday night (Feb. 10) when the Cedar Key Woman's Club celebrated its 32nd Annual Spaghetti Dinner at the Cedar Key Community Center.



Janet Ramsey sells tickets for chances to win the quilt. Proceeds go to the Fisher House in Gainesville.

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Susan Rosenthal cooks her delicious spaghetti sauce.



Preparing to serve diners are (from left) Jan Hendrix, Linda Kimball and Esta Johnston.

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Serving drinks are (from left) Eileen Senecal, Judy Duvall, Paula Westcott and Rose Malinowski.



Each table was decorated.

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Some of the many dessert choices are seen here.

At least 250 diners enjoyed the meals there, or they ate them outdoors at nearby locations they chose – looking out at the water at sunset, or they took them back to their residences on the island and off of the island.

The dozens of members who prepared meals and helped in many different ways helped the hundreds of guests enjoy another perfect spaghetti dinner fundraiser.

The dine-in or take-out dinners of wonderful homemade spaghetti, included the club's big dose of community spirit and love for people. Again the dinner went beyond the highest notch for excellence.

Certainly, the salads, Italian bread, an extraordinary selection of homemade desserts and iced tea or coffee are key ingredients, which added to the spaghetti sauce and pasta to please the patrons' palates. The choice for wine this year was yet an improvement that added still another dimension to the fun of the night.

This year, diners enjoyed the opportunity to have wine with their meal.

And for the second consecutive year, there was the offer of vegan spaghetti sauce – which was enjoyed by those individuals with that dietary preference.

Cedar Key Woman's Club President Jane Moore welcomed guests to the event as they came in the front door. Many people had forgotten that they put the tickets into the little box at the serving window rather than present them at the door. But that is OK, because the Cedar Key Woman's Club members all guided newcomers and repeat diners with the kindhearted words and kid gloves everyone might anticipate from this group.

Woman's Club Member Janet Ramsey manned the table to provide chances for people to donate to the Fisher House of Gainesville by purchasing a ticket to win a quilt.

For the fifth consecutive year, Susan Rosenthal, one of the past presidents of the Cedar Key Woman's Club, was the chef who made the sauce. Year after year, this is the sauce that everyone loves.

This year, the six top spaghetti cooks were Cedar Key Woman's Club members Karen Dean, Lynn Silvers, Joan Selby, Chris Black, Gini Barss and Donna Bushnell. Cedar Key Woman's Club Member Rosemary Danesi joined Chef Rosenthal in re-cooking and heating the 36 pounds of pasta – because spaghetti sauce does need pasta no matter how great it is on its own.

The ambiance in the Community Center was divine for the in-house diners. Authentic Italian-

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themed music, like Volare and Santa Lucia, played gently in the background. Some part of the CKWC membership decorated each of the many tables, where each table could seat several individuals.

The CKWC assured each tabletop was adorned by artifacts of a festive motif, which was reflexive of Italy. They thoughtfully placed everything from tablecloths to wine bottles with melted candle wax to add to the décor of the Community Center to make it into a “bistro” for the night.

The salad crew created perfectly tossed salads with traditional ingredients. Even the freshly baked bread was also freshly buttered by a set of club volunteers.

There must have been many CKWC donors to create the impressively vast array of homemade desserts.

Angel food cake, brownies, carrot cake, cheesecake with cherries, and German chocolate cake are just a very few of the many, many different desserts. Two long tables were filled from end-to-end with the several assorted desserts.

Among the servers of coffee, tea, water and wine were Eileen Senecal, Judy Duvall, Paula Westcott and Rose Malinowski.

And with so many members participating, there are some number of unnamed individuals who gallantly put forth the effort and yet remained in the hallowed halls of anonymity.

There really is a point beyond the food and ambiance for this spaghetti dinner. There is the camaraderie among the members that extends to their hundreds of guests as well. And table partners who may have started the evening as strangers left the dinner as newfound friends, or at least as fundraising acquaintances.

Surely the buffet-style meal service might cause some old soldiers to harken back to chow halls, but while this style of delivery becomes mechanical for some troops, the grace and style shown by the female servers on Saturday evening makes any machinery concept disappear.

While the Cedar Key Woman’s Club Annual Spaghetti Dinner was the event of the night on Saturday night at the Community Center, the Empty Bowls Event on Wednesday night (Feb. 7) was a winner as well.

That event heralded its first time in the Community Center this year, having outgrown its previous church location.

Headed by Marie Lewis, the event this year generated about \$4,000 to help the Cedar Key Food Pantry. Local potter Amy Gernhardt and her husband Henry Gernhardt are the community leaders who created this event and made it flourish over the years.

An upcoming event at the Cedar Key Community Center is the Cedar Key Lions Club Valentine’s Night (Feb. 14) Dance. There are no tickets being sold at the door. Only Lions Club members are selling the tickets.

The next big fundraiser for the Cedar Key Woman’s Club is the relatively famous Annual Fashion Show and Luncheon -- on March 8 at the Cedar Key Community Center. Tickets for the Annual Fashion Show and Luncheon cost \$15 and are available from any Cedar Key Woman's Club member or from the Cedar Key Chamber of Commerce at its Welcome Center on Second Street in downtown Cedar Key.

The Cedar Key Woman’s Club was formed in 1960, and members volunteer at various community events, with proceeds from fundraising that helps to support Cedar Key at places like the Cedar Key School, the Cedar Key Public Library, the Food Pantry, Another Way, and the Cedar Key Volunteer Fire Department. This club is also active in Support for Troops, and in raising funds for Fisher House.