



Greater Tampa Association Exceeds RPAC Fundraising Goal With Chili Cook-off Extravaganza – November 2013

On April 25, 2013, the RPAC “bean counters” of the Greater Tampa Association of REALTORS® (GTAR) had a real field day, and we’re not just talking chili. The 6,000-member association held its first annual fundraising extravaganza – featuring a chili cook-off – that brought in over \$14,000, pushing GTAR’s contributions easily over its assessed goal for the year.

“We were inspired, at a Florida RPAC training session, by another local board that had been doing well with chili cook-offs,” explains GTAR CEO Carol Austin. “We were looking to create excitement and raise awareness and funds for RPAC, and knew this would be fun. Thanks to the hard work of Darlene Davenport, our Extravaganza Event Chair, and our Event Committee, it was an overwhelming success.”

GTAR attracted event sponsorships from a handful of companies within or related to the industry. To up the festivity quotient, they held the fundraiser at a beautiful waterfront city park on a spring afternoon and into early evening, hired a live band, and added an auction, both live and silent. There were activities for children, beer and wine for the grown-ups, and food trucks to supplement the chili tastings. Florida REALTORS® RPAC Representative, Courtney Barnard, brought fun games and educated participants on the importance of investing in RPAC.

With a \$2,500 RPAC Fundraising Grant from the NAR in hand, Davenport went shopping for auction items. The grant bought GTAR many of its most desirable prizes, including a television, airfare for a donated getaway, an iPad, a fishing rod and reel, and a rolling cooler packed with goodies and ready to party. Members also donated a number of trips that did very well, from rustic cabin retreats to getaways in Costa Rica and Puerto Rico. Greg Lord, Florida’s District 7 Vice President, was an enthusiastic and persuasive auctioneer, keeping the crowd lively and the dollars flowing.

The chili competition drew nine entrants, and a panel of celebrity judges including local politicians, a popular chef, and the food columnist from the local newspaper, who happens to be something of a chili competition guru. Entries included recipes ranging from traditional to vegetarian to even chocolate, and were judged on five different characteristics. The trophy was awarded to the Tampa Women’s Council of REALTORS® (WCR) Chapter, with a separate award given for best table presentation.

About 130 people attended, and “everyone had a great time!” says Austin. The next day, she received an email from a past president saying it was one of the



best association events he'd ever experienced. Mari Colgan, RPAC Chair, notes that it was heartening to see a number of affiliate members donating to RPAC, as well as members; they gained six major investors at the event, and raised overall RPAC participation from 11percent to 15 percent.

With so much of the groundwork laid by this year's successful event, plans are already underway to hold a second annual chili cook-off for RPAC next year. "It'll be even bigger and better," says Davenport. "We'll tweak the arrangements a bit, based on what we've learned this year, but now that we know what we're doing, our biggest concern will be the weather!"

To learn more about how the REALTORS® of Tampa heated up their RPAC awareness, contributions, and fun factor, contact Brenda Rabbitt, Assistant Executive Officer of the Greater Tampa Association of REALTORS®, at Brenda@gtar.net or 813.879.7010.

About 130 people attended the Greater Tampa Association's first annual RPAC fundraising extravaganza, featuring a chili cook-off



Hillsborough County Property Appraiser Bob Henriquez (on the left) and Former Tampa Mayor Dick Greco (right) judge the chili.



Tampa WCR members and chili entry winners, left to right: Kathy Razzano, Lea Lagueux and Claudette Kelsey



GTAR Vice President/RPAC Committee Member Barbara Jordan (left) and CEO Carol Austin (right) calculating the judges' scores to determine the chili winner.