<u>The History of Empty Bowls:</u> “In November 1990, art teacher John Hartom wanted students at Lahser High School in Bloomfield Hills, Mich. (pop. 3,940), to participate in a local food drive, so he came up with a unique idea—students would craft ceramic bowls, invite the faculty to a soup lunch and request donations.

Students loved the idea, and on the day of the lunch, Hartom and his wife, Lisa Blackburn, also an art educator, spoke to the group about hunger. At the end of the meal, they related how students and teachers weren’t hungry because they had just eaten, while many in the community still had empty bowls. Hartom then invited the staff to keep the empty ceramic bowls as a reminder of those less fortunate.

“There was a moment of stunned silence, and the whole environment changed,” says Hartom, 59. “In that moment, Lisa

and I knew something special had happened—and that we had a responsibility to make it happen again."

By the following year, the couple had created an information packet of materials, using that first event as a model for others to emulate, which they presented to art teachers and at pottery shops and conferences during their summer travels throughout New England. They also created Empty Bowls, a nonprofit organization, and helped raise more than $1 million that year for World Food Day, Oct. 16.

Over the next few years, the Empty Bowls idea spread, and Hartom eventually retired from teaching in 1999 to devote more time to the cause.

Today, schools from elementary to college level, civic organizations and individuals sponsor community Empty Bowls events in almost every state.

"Although the Empty Bowls organization provides guidance to those wishing to hold a fundraising event, they are primarily hands off. We only ask organizers to use the Empty Bowls name and to distribute money locally," says Hartom, who now lives in Burnsville, N.C. (pop. 1,623).

Overall, tens of millions of dollars have been raised through Empty Bowls events around the country. Each sponsoring organization decides where to donate funds, he says, so all money raised benefits local food banks, soup kitchens and shelters. {emptybowls.com}"