

## Great Chefs returns with 'Fire & Ice' appetizer theme to benefit Women's Resource Center

CAITLIN HEANEY WEST / PUBLISHED: APRIL 19, 2017  
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MICHAEL J. MULLEN / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER Nora Dillon, left, and Peg Ruddy of the Women's Resource Center prepare for the 27th annual Great Chefs fundraiser.



Chefs gather to promote the 27th annual Great Chefs fundraiser for Women's Resource Center. From left in the front are: Jackie Lewandoski, Cathy Reppert of Truly Scrumptions Cake Studio, Patricia Dickert Nieves of Terra Preta, and Beth Barcia of Palazzo. Second row: Jourdan Azevedo and Damien Miseo of Posh and Gregory Nieves of Tera Preta. Back row: Darryl Bartlett of A Little Pizza Heaven. Michael J. Mullen / Staff Photographer

Competition pushes several local restaurants to extremes next month as Great Chefs returns for a 27th year.

With the theme “Fire & Ice,” the culinary contest and fundraiser for the Women’s Resource Center takes place Thursday, May 4, at Hilton Scranton & Conference Center, 100 Adams Ave.

After a couple years having restaurants prepare their best meatballs for the competition, the center this year switched the focus to appetizers. Five restaurants — A Little Pizza Heaven, Angelo’s Italian Ristorante, Constantino’s Catering, Nikki’s at the Ben Mar Restaurant and Russell’s Restaurant — will prepare “blazing hot” appetizers, while Arcaro & Genell, Blu Wasabi, Palazzo 53, POSH at the Scranton Club and Terra Preta will craft “icy cold” ones, said Nora Dillon, director of development for Women’s Resource Center.

“We just try to make it something appealing for the community, and meatballs get old,” she said. “So we just thought appetizers would be something also cool and in that people can sort of walk around and still (have) cocktails and still test out the appetizers.”

The action begins at 5:30 p.m. with cocktails, appetizer tastings, music by Ron Leas and voting. A panel of judges will determine the top cold and hot appetizers, but guests can vote for their favorites to win the people’s choice award. At 7 p.m., guests can grab dinner at the buffet and settle down to eat in the ballroom, where a to-be-determined guest speaker — Dillon said it will be someone involved with the center — will address the crowd.

The Scranton-based center provides shelter, a crisis hotline, advocacy and other services to victims, both male and female, of domestic violence, sexual assault and related dangerous situations in Lackawanna and Susquehanna counties. Last year, the mother of a woman killed as a result of domestic violence spoke at Great Chefs.

“Basically we’re just looking to let people know that (domestic violence) is something that happens every day in our community and that it’s something to not be ignored,” Dillon said. “Just if they



know of anybody that's experiencing something like that, then we are their resource, and we are there to help them."

Tickets for Great Chefs — the center's biggest fundraiser of the year — are \$75, available in advance only by Tuesday through the center and [eventbrite.com](https://www.eventbrite.com). Proceeds benefit the center's operational costs.

"We're heavily grant funded, so this is something to help with the day-to-day (costs)," Dillon said.

And the community has stepped up to make that possible for nearly three decades, realizing "the wonderful work the Women's Resource Center does," Dillon noted.

"I mean, I'm shocked by just being out in the community and saying I work at the Women's Resource Center and the amount of people I run into that are like, 'Oh my gosh, they helped me' or 'They helped a friend' or 'They helped a daughter,'" she said. "(Domestic violence is) a prevalent issue that affects a lot of people in this community. People, especially in this community, are very supportive of the local nonprofits in this area that really do a lot in the community."

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If you go

What: Great Chefs 27 — Fire & Ice

When: Thursday, May 4, 5:30 to 9 p.m.

Where: Hilton Scranton & Conference Center, 100 Adams Ave.

Details: Tickets are \$75, and proceeds benefit the Women's Resource Center. For tickets, call the center at 570-346-4460 or visit [wrcnepa.org](https://wrcnepa.org) or [eventbrite.com](https://www.eventbrite.com). Reserve by Tuesday. No tickets will be sold at the door.