

Chili cook-off raises nearly \$1,000 for March of Dimes

By JAMES CLARK
 Editor for the Southern Standard
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Joe Anna Farless has a vested interest in supporting the March of Dimes. After her grandson, Cruz Monzon, was born 2-1/2 months early last year, she knows first-hand the support March of Dimes provides.

So when it came to something as simple as making a pot of chili for a March of Dimes fundraiser at River Park Hospital on Friday, Farless was more than happy to oblige.

"He only weighed 2 pounds, 7 ounces," said Farless of Cruz, who was born in September 2008.

Not only did Farless enter the chili contest, her entry won first place and was described as "mild but flavorful" by one of the judges. Nine River Park employees entered the chili cook-off.

"I used two ingredients I don't use at home, diced tomatoes and onion, because if I put them in there at home my kids won't eat it," said Farless.

There was no problem with anyone eating her chili Friday at lunch as it was one of the more popular of the nine chili entries. Overall, the River Park chili cook-off and bake sale raised nearly \$1,000 for March of Dimes.

The chili cook-off raised \$540 as anyone who wanted to eat paid \$5 for a bowl of chili and grilled cheese sandwich. A separate bake sale raised \$403.

Judy Sharp claimed second place for her spicy and chunky chili.

Family Birthing Unit director Jenny Grady was one of the chili contestants. She described her batch as "mild without a lot of veggies."

"Speaking for the Family Birth Unit," said Grady, "the March of Dimes is very dear to our hearts. Prematurity is one of the leading causes of death in infants. In the state of Tennessee infant mortality is high, and the March of Dimes has done a great deal in reducing infant mortality and also premature births and birth defects as well. It's a great organization and a great cause and we're out to support that cause."

River Park marketing director Claudia Hall says the chili she made does not come from a secret recipe.

"Mine came straight from the *Southern Living* cookbook," said Hall.

River Park community relations coordinator Ashley Wright said just the opposite.

"I'm a true Southern cook,"

said Wright. "I don't use a recipe and I don't measure. The bad part of that is if I make something that gets really good reviews, I don't remember how I made it."



Joe Anna Farless emerged from a field of nine to win the chili cook-off.



James Clark photo

Duke Rice and Emily Hobbs were two of the judges in River Park Hospital's chili cook-off Friday. Proceeds from the chili cook-off and bake sale will be donated to March of Dimes.



Photo provided

Cruz Monzon was born over two months early and weighed just 2 pounds, 7 ounces.

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