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**Eat. Drink. Help Many – A Taste of Athens 2008**  
**February 24, 2008 6pm – 9pm**

**ATHENS, GA** – *A Taste of Athens* is the area’s premier food and beverage event organized to benefit Community Connection of Northeast Georgia. The event draws an estimated crowd of 2,000 food enthusiasts eager to experience the culinary creations and luscious libations from over 50 local restaurants. In addition to exceptional food, the evening includes a silent auction and the *Red Clay Chef Competition*. Inspired by Food Network’s Iron Chef,™ the *Red Clay Chef Competition* is a high-spirited event that pairs local chefs Emilie Greer of **The Daily Neighborhood Deli** and Antonio Spadera of **La Dolce Vita** in a challenge of skill, creativity and flair for flavor. Once the secret ingredient is revealed, the chefs will have 45 minutes to prepare an award-winning dish, to be determined by a panel of judges. Rounding out the evening is a huge silent auction brimming with artwork, pottery, jewelry, travel, culinary packages and more!

“This year’s event couldn’t be any bigger,” notes co-chair Russel Stalvey. “With over 55 vendors we are at max capacity. Everyone seems more excited than ever and they are truly bringing their best to the table.” Restaurateurs are certainly doing just that. Reflecting just how diverse this city’s palate really is attendees will be able to try the new organic dining available at the Savannah Room at the Georgia Center as they will showcase their new Friday evening dining featuring sustainable cuisine. Newcomer Smokey Dick’s Barbeque owner Richard Floyd is putting his own stamp on local ‘cue with smoked ham & shoulders and his own special sauce, “I am looking forward to being a part of *A Taste of Athens*, after attending for the last two years I decided to try my hand at being a vendor,” muses Floyd. While he admits being a little nervous as a first year competitor, “I know no matter what it will be a great night and more importantly it’s for a great cause.” Vendors themselves have a chance to win two prizes including Best Food and Best Beverage from a panel of four roving judges and the audience will get their chance to vote with the People’s Choice award.

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This event is truly a community effort, with the film crew from the Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Georgia to air the Red Clay Chef competition live during the event. Under the steady hand of Professor James Biddle a group of over 40 students have been busily working on everything from footage of the Red Clay Chef competition secret ingredient, known as *Project Yum Yum*, to the backgrounds of both chefs to the work that Community Connection does. Hosts Lamar Thomas, chef at the East-West Bistro and former Red Clay Chef competitor, along with Kevin Character and Elle Orzo will keep the audience well informed during the battle. The Grady College team will put together a commemorative DVD that will be available after the event.

Art has always been a vital component to this event, and this year is no exception. Again this year the event will feature a commemorative poster from local artist Jamie Calkin. “It was important for me when I took on *A Taste of Athens* three years ago to create some sort of legacy for the event,” states Shelby Wright, event co-chair. “I thought of Jazzfest in New Orleans and their fabulous posters from local artists and it hit me- that’s what we should do.” Wright also points out, “We couldn’t raise the amount of money each year that we do without the amazing support of the artist community and I wanted to give something back to them. In discussing the local artists this year my co-chair, Russel Stalvey, and I talked about who really captures the vibe of Athens and no question it was Jamie.” Calkin started drawing and painting in 1996 as a graduate student in North Carolina. Since then, he has taken numerous drawing and watercolor classes, mainly from the Georgia Center and the Lyndon House Arts Center and has taught art as well. Calkin started selling his paintings at the artisan market at Athfest 2000. This year’s commemorative poster is a colorful and energetic representation of the event itself and will be for sale for \$15. Fifty limited edition signed artists prints will be for sale as well, and the original will be available for purchase in the silent auction.

Another major component of the event is the silent auction, which has consistently raised over \$20,000 in the last two years. Hopes for this year’s silent auction are high again. “The generosity of this community absolutely amazes me,” points out Melissa Williamson silent auction chair. With auction items including signed items from local bands including Widespread Panic and R.E.M., Geoff Pickett pottery, jewelry from Aurum Studios, travel packages to Highlands, North Carolina and a private in-home dinner for 8 with Chef Lamar Thomas of East/West Bistro. Rounding out the offerings will be spa and restaurant certificates, and more.

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The evening wraps up with an official *A Taste of Athens* after-party held at Harry Bissett's New Orleans Café at 9:30 p.m. A portion of the proceeds benefit Community Connection.

Tickets are \$45 in advance / \$50 at the door with group discounts for parties of 6 or more are also available. Tickets will be available at participating outlets including Aurum Studios, Borders Books & Music Store, Homeplace Gifts, all Jittery Joe's Coffee stores, La Dolce Vita, Maison Bleu, Marti's at Midday, The Daily Neighborhood Deli and the Rolling Pin or online at [www.TasteofAthens.com](http://www.TasteofAthens.com).

*A Taste of Athens* is made possible through the generous support of many sponsors including:

**Presenting Sponsors:**

Partner Software, Inc. - Southern Broadcasting (Magic 102.1 / WGAU 1340 am)

**Platinum Sponsors:**

Comcast Spotlight - Manning Brothers - REM

Proceeds from *A Taste of Athens* support Community Connection of Northeast Georgia; an Athens based non-profit organization that serves the 14-county area. Community Connection programs include:

**2-1-1 of Northeast Georgia** – An information and referral call system that connects callers with agencies that can best assist with their needs.

**Hands On Northeast Georgia** - A comprehensive program that connects volunteers with volunteer opportunities throughout the community.

**Child Care Resource & Referral of Northeast Georgia** – A program that promotes quality child care by assisting child care providers and parents seeking child care.

Community Connection also serves an incubator for new programs that are developing to provide services that are otherwise lacking in the community.

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## 2008 A Taste of Athens Participating Food and Beverage Vendors

Agua Linda Mexican Restaurant	Lee Epting Catering
Angelo's Ristorante Italiano	Leon Farmer & Company
Aromas	Lindsey's Culinary Market
Barberitos	Locos Grill and Pub
Bee's Knees Bakery & Gifts	Maison Bleu
Big City Bread Café	Mama's Boy
Black Forest Bakery	Marti's at Midday
Cecilia Villaveces Cakes	Mirko Pasta
Center Stage Catering	Northeast Sales Distributing Inc
Athens Coca Cola	Pepsi Bottling Group
Copper Creek Brewing Co	Porterhouse Grill
DePalma's Italian Cafe	Quality Wines & Spirits
Donderos' Kitchen	Rachel's Southern Style Restaurant
East West Bistro	Savannah Room
Earth Fare	Smokey Dick Bar-B-Que
Farm 255	Steaverino's
Five Points Deli & More	Taste of India
Foundry Park Inn & Spa	Terrapin Beer Company
Girasoles	Thai Spoon
Gnat's Landing	The Basil Press
Harry Bissett's New Orleans Café &	The Daily Neighborhood Deli
Harry Bissett's Bayou Grill	The Grill
Il Gelato	The Grit
Jennings Mill Country Club	The National
Jimmy's BBQ	Tiger Mountain Vineyards
Jittery Joe's Coffee	Trumps Catering
La Dolce Vita Italian Restaurant	Waterman Spring Water
Last Resort Grill	Weaver D's Fine Foods

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