



A bartender at The Bistro shakes a drink. Employees get behind the restaurant group's off-season specials that make money for area nonprofits.

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Restaurant groups helping organizations

Off-season specials bring in the locals to support work by nonprofits.

By Timothy J. Woods

For many the so-called shoulder seasons — the ever-shortening periods between summer and ski season, and then ski season and summer — are the times to stay away from Jackson Hole.

For locals, though, it's a time to exhale and get out and about without having to battle increasingly overwhelming crowds for a bite to eat at their favorite establishments.

"We're psyched to be a part of this."

— Carrie Geraci
JACKSON HOLE PUBLIC ART

And for area nonprofits and other organizations, it can be a time to reap the benefits of the generosity of Jackson Hole restaurant groups and their customers.

Fine Dining Restaurant Group, owned by longtime



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Patrons fill The Bistro, a restaurant owned by the Fine Dining group. Fine Dining initiated the off-season special 10 years ago — buy a meal, get the second for \$2. Over the years the business has been able to give more than \$200,000 to local nonprofits.

Jackson Hole restaurateur Gavin Fine, is among those that recognize both the need for locals to get out and enjoy some of the town's dining offerings and also the need of area organizations, many of which rely heavily on the generosity of the local population.

One way Fine Dining does that is through its "2 for \$2" deal at several of its restaurants, where customers can

buy one entree and get a second for \$2. The \$2 for the second meal is donated to a local organization that has put its name on the list, sometimes waiting a couple of years for to be called because of the length of the list of interested nonprofits and other groups.

This is the 10th year of the fundraising promotion, which has seen slightly different iterations over the decade. This year's promotion ended just

last week.

"Usually we do four consecutive weeks of the off-season specials," said Kendra Alessandro, Fine Dining's director of communications. "We decided this fall to do it a little bit differently; we ran two weeks of the specials in October and then the final two weeks again Nov. 29 until Dec. 12."

Each week of the fundraising specials benefits a specific

organization. This fall, for example, the organizations that were beneficiaries of the fundraiser were the Jackson Hole Lacrosse Club and Horse Warriors in October, and Watershed Jackson Hole and Jackson Hole Public Art each of the two most recent weeks.

The money raised through such promotions — also held by other restaurants across

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Some nonprofits wait several years to be chosen as the beneficiary of Fine Dining's off-season specials.

RESTAURANTS

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Jackson Hole, including places such as Pizzeria Caldera and Hand Fire Pizza in downtown Jackson, among other philanthropy-minded restaurants — is truly meaningful for the recipient organizations. With this fall's promotions, Fine Dining Restaurant Group topped \$200,000 raised since the "2 for \$2" was conceived in 2011, Alessandro said.

Carrie Geraci, director of Jackson Hole Public Art, said her organization is "psyched" to have been

chosen as a beneficiary of Fine Dining's offseason giving. She named a list of things the money could help fund, including "programs like the Art Spot, or the Wild Walls program," among others.

"We just we feel honored and special to be part of this, for sure," Geraci said. "And it's just really good visibility, especially for a smaller organization like Jackson Hole Public Art. It just helps us reach potentially new audiences that might not know about our work. So anyway, we're psyched. We're psyched to be a part of this."

Alessandro was quick to point out that it's not

Speaking of locals, both Alessandro and Geraci recognized their enthusiasm for supporting their favorite nonprofits and the opportunity to share a meal downtown largely sans the ubiquitous presence of tourists, as seen during the crowded summer and winter seasons.

"The nonprofit is a huge driver in why somebody goes out to enjoy the offseason specials because this is very charitable community and people have their nonprofits that they support. If they see that somebody's benefiting from some initiative, they'll come out and support it, which is

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Roadhouse Pub and Eatery was among the participating restaurants.

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great," Alessandro said. "But the other component of that is we find that a lot of times locals come out during the offseason because they expect to see other locals there and it's a little slower paced, so that is a driver as well."

Noted Geraci: "Having lived here for a while, and having worked in a restaurant a long time ago, this, the [fundraising promotions] came about to kind of keep people employed during the offseason, and then I think it kept going because it just sort of turned into a celebration of the offseason and kind of like a locals appreciation."

Fine Dining owner Fine has long donated time and resources to charitable organizations and nonprofits. His reasoning for running the offseason fundraising specials falls in line with some of what Alessandro and

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Geraci mentioned.

"This community has been so good to me and Fine Dining Restaurant Group," Fine said. "We feel strongly about giving back, and also look forward to seeing our locals gather together out and about in slower times."

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