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**COSMO SPECIALTY FIBERS CEO, MIKE ENTZ, IS CROWNED**  
**“GRAYS HARBOR’S NEXT TOP CHEF”**

Cosmo Specialty Fiber’s CEO Mike Entz was crowned “Grays Harbor’s Next Top Chef” at the United Way of Grays Harbor’s Cook-off for the Kick-off, collecting \$695 in votes for the title. Putting the hard economic times aside and starting a fresh annual campaign, the United Way of Grays Harbor raised over \$1,890 at their Cook-off for the Kick-off last night at the Grays Harbor Country Club. This fundraising effort brings the 2011-2012 Campaign to an official start towards the overall goal of \$525,000.

From a list that consisted of Rice, beans, (dried product—no Uncle Ben's or processed product), pasta, canned tomatoes, rolled oats, canned fruit & vegetables, ground turkey, french fries, salt, pepper, garlic, onion, sugar, flour, butter (or shortening), tomato paste, vinegar, oregano, parsley, thyme, bread, ketchup, mustard, mayo, and one additional ingredient of the chef’s choice. Using chili powder as his one additional ingredient, Entz came up with a chili he called “War Eagle Surprise.” The name, of which Entz is alum, signifies the school battle cry for Auburn University.

“This was such a fun way to kick-off our campaign. I can’t thank our six chefs’ enough for their effort that they put into creating their recipes” said Executive Director, Lynsi Polanco. “This was a great start to move into a new campaign. We depend on events like these as well as the funds from payroll deduction, individuals, endowments and corp. gifts to help generate our overall campaign totals.” Polanco added. “We are thankful to those who turned out for this premier event and for their support in kicking-off our 2011-2012 campaign.”

Welcoming everyone to the event was Board President, Bob Torgerson, who started the night with the reminder that more than ever, our neighbors here in Grays Harbor need help and assistance. The costs of basic necessities have gone up, we have had layoffs county wide and many working class families are struggling to make ends meet. Many of our neighbors are in want of basic human services, such as food, clothing and shelter. United Way of Grays Harbor partner agencies are seeing people they have never worked with before in significant increases monthly.

Torgerson read an article that was released yesterday stating that the nation's poverty rate rose last year to 15.1 percent, the highest level in 17 years, according to new data from the Census Bureau. The agency's latest poverty report, released Tuesday, shows that 46 million people were poor and that the median income dropped last year by more than two percent to about \$49,445. That "poverty line" budget doesn't take into account such items as school supplies and emergency medical needs. Making ends meet and getting by is a daily struggle for many.

Campaign Chair Margaret Carthum announced the campaign goal of \$525,000, reminding the crowd that it isn't just people living at that poverty line who need help. Take for example the person who suddenly is without a job and can't afford childcare while they look for employment, or the person whose spouse has passed away and all that is left is a mountain of medical expenses – and no way to pay the heating bill. There are so many ways that United Way reaches out into the community to help people just like this by focusing on four key areas through its partner agency programs: Helping Kids Succeed, Increasing Self-Sufficiency, Improving Health and Healing and Responding in Emergencies

Carthum reiterated that through United Way and its goals, you are able to give a hand up and not a hand out. Your money stays here in Grays Harbor, so you truly are a local person helping local people. Your donations are tax deductible and United Way keeps its operating costs low so more of your donation goes out into the community to help those truly in need. Best of all, your donations can go to help so many people through the various agency programs, stretching your donation dollars further.

United Way of Grays Harbor is helping meet the most critical needs in our County; from "at risk" youth to seniors, domestic violence to hunger and hospice care to daycare. Donations support 23 local health and human service agencies. Our mission is to unite people and resources to build a stronger, healthier Grays Harbor. If you would like to make a donation to United Way of Grays Harbor, please call (360) 532-6260 or mail to 101 E. Market Street, Suite 544 ~ Aberdeen, Washington 98520. Every bit counts and makes a difference.

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