How Would You Feed the Hungry?

Olive Garden’s Seventh Annual Pasta Tales Writing Contest Asks Kids What They Would Do To Help the Hungry in Their Community

ORLANDO, Fla., Sept. 4 /PRNewswire-FirstCall/ -- Hunger has many faces and knows no boundaries. Our neighbors, friends, classmates and relatives may need help. What would you do to help them?

The Olive Garden Italian Restaurant wants to know. Young writers, ages 7 to 16, with ideas on how to feed the hungry, are invited to enter Pasta Tales, Olive Garden's seventh annual national essay-writing contest. The essay must answer in 250 words or less, "What three things would you do to feed the hungry in your community?"

One winner will be chosen in each age category and receive a $250 U.S. Savings Bond and dinner with their family at their local Olive Garden. One student will be selected as the grand prize winner and receive a trip to New York, dinner at the Olive Garden in Times Square and a $1,000 U.S. Savings Bond.

"This year’s Pasta Tales question is especially important with the growing number of hungry children, families and senior citizens needing assistance from food banks," said Steve Coe, spokesperson for Olive Garden. "Our goal is to inspire young writers to voice their opinions through creative writing and we hope this particular question will motivate them to become more involved in their community."

A panel of judges from the Quill and Scroll Society of the College of Journalism and Communications at the University of Iowa reviews each entry and rates the best essays based on creativity, organization, grammar, punctuation and spelling.

Since Pasta Tales was implemented six years ago, Olive Garden has received more than 60,000 essays from students writing about topics such as what they would do to make their cities great; who they would like to have dinner with and why; three items from the 20th century they would place in a time capsule; and who they'd like to trade places with for a day. Olive Garden has sponsored programs based on award-winning essays including a senior mentoring program in Venice, Fla., and American Red Cross CPR classes at Poly-Tech High School in Long Beach, Calif.

Entry forms for Pasta Tales are available at local Olive Garden restaurants or on the Olive Garden Web site, www.olivegarden.com, beginning October 4th. Entries must include the writer’s name, address, city, state, zip code, area code and phone number, and date of birth including year. Entries must be postmarked by December 6th and sent to Pasta Tales PMB 2000, 6278 North Federal Highway, Fort Lauderdale, FL, 33308-1916 or entries can be submitted on-line at www.olivegarden.com. For more information, call (407) 245-4682.

Olive Garden is the leading restaurant in the Italian dining segment with 496 restaurants, more than 60,000 employees and $1.9 billion in annual sales. Olive Garden is a division of Darden Restaurants Inc. (NYSE: DRI), the world's largest casual dining company.