

## Ceramics Education and Food Insecurity through Community Engagement

*WCU & the Sylva Community Table: Teaching Students to Put Their Mud Where Their Mouth Is*

Faculty member, Ceramics Area Coordinator, and Mudcat Club Advisor Heather Mae Erickson ([hmerickson@wcu.edu](mailto:hmerickson@wcu.edu)) worked with ceramics students and the Community Table Director Amy Sims ([CTofJackson@gmail.com](mailto:CTofJackson@gmail.com)) to create bowls for local fundraiser. Students of the Mudcat Club, WCU's Ceramic Club, and of Heather Mae Erickson's Advanced Ceramics class created around 100 handmade bowls for the Empty Bowls program in April 2016 at the Sylva Community Table. That is nearly double what the university and these groups donated last year said Heather Mae Erickson, assistant professor of ceramics and coordinator of the program. The students took part in community scholarship by helping to set up, run, and engage with the guests about ceramics, bowls, and Western Carolina University. Attendees at the Empty Bowl event paid \$20 at the door to receive their choice of a handmade bowl made by local potters, as well as enjoy soups and desserts while listening to live music at the event. All proceeds benefited the Community Table's mission to provide nutritious meals to neighbors in need in a welcoming environment.

About this collaborative project as an example of community engagement, Assistant Professor Erickson said, "As an educator and studio artist/designer who researches and creates functional work for people to interact and think about the rituals of dining, this project is near and dear to my heart. Getting to work with my students, community artists, community members and the Sylva Community Table engages all involved in ways that are unmeasurable and unknown. I am working with the ceramics students and Mudcats Club to develop an even more meaningful exchange for the future of our partnership. We are excited to present the first iteration of the follow up project that includes scholarship, teaching and service to the Empty Bowls event at the Undergraduate Research Expo."

If you would like your community engagement work recognized through the STAR Engagement Projects program, please submit your proposals through the [Community-based Activities Faculty Survey](#) administered annually in the spring semester from early April – late May.

