

Canstruction Brings Food To Charity

By Ashleigh Ruhl

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Laboriously stacking more than 4,000 sardine cans in row after row of perfect circles, workers last Thursday used the cans to compose an old-timey, larger-than-life diver's helmet.

That edible creation was part of the inaugural Long Beach Canstruction Competition benefiting the nonprofit Food Finders, with the food used in the structure being donated to the cause. The event's motto was: "One Can Make A Difference."

Four teams of engineers and architects had 12 hours to complete their Canstruction entries last Thursday inside the lobby of Mercedes Benz of Long Beach (2300 E. Spring St. in Signal Hill). Now, the structures will remain on display until Monday, Sept. 1; the public is encouraged to visit the dealership and "vote" for their favorite structure by placing a canned food donation next to it.

Kelly Tarbet, an office manager for Belmont Shore-based Sennikoff Architects, said the company's office was closed during the competition and several of the employees brought along family members to help with the effort.

"We've been working on this for three months," she said about the company's design. Primarily, they used 600 cans of tuna as well as 264 boxes of cereal — as well as an assortment of canned vegetables and bags of beans — to recreate iconic structures in Long Beach such as City Hall and The Breakers. P2S Engineering together with MHP Structural Engineers "canstructured" The Queen Mary as well as the Spruce Goose Dome and Lion's Club Lighthouse. Another team, from Jeffrey Rome & Associates, crafted a large Olaf character from the film "Frozen."

Moffatt & Nichol, another Long Beach firm, had nearly a dozen workers crafting the diver's helmet. "When we were presented with this challenge, we got excited and felt like we should do this for a great cause," mechanical engineer Ari Konyalian said. "We practiced building this from start to finish three times in someone's garage. We want to win."

But no matter who wins the Canstruction Competition, Food Finders comes out on top.

Diana Lara, the vice president of operations for Food Finders, said the structures themselves are made out of a combined 5,000 pounds of food, which is enough to provide the hungry with 4,000 meals. Food Finders, established in 1989, works to eliminate food waste and feeds impoverished families in the community.

"Canstruction is something I've been wanting for the past few years; I've seen other food banks



Canstruction

CANNY CREATION. The crew from Moffatt & Nichol create a diver's helmet during the Canstruction Competition.

internationally do different Canstruction events, and I knew we really needed to bring something like that to Long Beach,” Lara said. “Besides collecting food from the structures and from public votes, we are educating the public about our organization. This allows us to tell our story and let people know that we are providing 40,000 meals per day in Los Angeles and Orange counties.”

Lara added that she was impressed with the quality of the structures being created.

“This was about thinking out of the box, and we had palm trees made out of seaweed bags, bark out of baked beans, water made from water bottles ...” she said. “It was very exciting to see the time and effort that those groups put in. Many practiced building their structures multiple times before the competition and took this very seriously.”

For more details, visit the displays at Mercedes Benz or call the dealership at 988-8300. Or, visit www.longbeach.canstruction.org.

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