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## **PUBLIC VOTING NOW OPEN FOR CHARLIE AWARDS' 'OUTSTANDING FOOD ITEM'**

Minneapolis (October 15, 2012) --- Voting for "Outstanding Food Item" is now open to the public for the 2012 Charlie Awards, a celebration that recognizes the exceptional contributions of the Twin Cities metro area restaurant, food and drink industry. Over 150 restaurants and food trucks have entered one food item they believe is representative of their business.

The public is encouraged to go online between now and October 28, 2012 to vote for their favorite food item. The food items are grouped in the following neighborhoods (subject to change based on number of entries): Downtown Minneapolis, North Minneapolis/North Metro, South Minneapolis/South Metro, St. Paul/East Metro and Twin Cities West Metro. For information on voting, visit [charliesexceptionale.com](http://charliesexceptionale.com).

The second annual Charlie Awards will be held on Sunday, November 11, 2012 at the Pantages Theatre in downtown Minneapolis beginning at 2 p.m. A VIP brunch sponsored by *Mpls.St. Paul Magazine* will precede the show at 11:30 a.m. at The Brave New Workshop. There will also be an after-party sponsored by *Minnesota Monthly* from 3:30 – 5 p.m. in the IDS Center Crystal Court.

Tickets for the Charlie Awards are available online at [charliesexceptionale.com](http://charliesexceptionale.com); at the box offices of the State, Orpheum and Pantages theatres; or at any Ticketmaster outlet. Tickets for the main show and after-party are \$35 (\$25 for members of the food community). Tickets for all three events, including the VIP brunch, are \$100, with a portion of the proceeds benefiting Open Arms of Minnesota.

The Charlie Awards celebrate all of the organizations, businesses and individuals who comprise the Twin Cities' restaurant, food and drink industry. The awards being presented are: Lifetime Achievement; Community Hero; Outstanding Chef, Emerging Chef, Pastry Chef, Service, Bartender, Restaurateur, Restaurant, Restaurant Design, Food Truck, Food Item, Local Craft Brew and Cup of Coffee. There is also a special Neighborhood Hero award given to a restaurant that has made positive change happen at the local level.

The award show will be 90 minutes of live entertainment featuring emcee Brian "B.T." Turner from Cities97, and will highlight some of the best and brightest in the business. The awards will consist of two components – individuals and businesses honored by their peers and outstanding food and beverages recognized by the public and industry leaders.

Awards for individuals and businesses will be determined by a vote of all restaurants participating in the Charlie Awards. Each establishment participating will have one vote in the various categories, with the individual/business having the most votes in each category receiving recognition. Food items receiving recognition will be determined by both the public and a panel of experts. For more information on how to become a participating establishment, visit [charliesexceptionale.com](http://charliesexceptionale.com).

Sponsors for The Charlie Awards include: General Mills, HealthPartners, Radisson Hotels, U.S. Foods, Walser Automotive, Open Arms, *Minnesota Monthly*, *Mpls.St. Paul Magazine*, Cities97, 2 Gingers, Joia, Ispiri Design-Build, Kohler, G&K Services, Open Table, Horizon Food Service Equipment and the Minnesota Restaurant Association.

### **About The Charlie Awards**

The awards are named after the legendary restaurant, Charlie's Café Exceptionale, which was a mainstay in downtown Minneapolis until the 1980s. The Charlie Awards were created to recognize the outstanding contributions that our metro area food and restaurant industry to ensure a diverse, vibrant and creative lifestyle and economy. The Charlie's are the inspiration of Minnesota's own culinary expert and James Beard award-winning food journalist, Sue Zelickson. Visit [charliesexceptionale.com](http://charliesexceptionale.com) for more information on the 2012 Charlie Awards.

The 2012 Charlie Awards will benefit Open Arms of Minnesota, the only nonprofit organization in Minnesota that cooks and delivers free meals specifically tailored to meet the nutrition needs of individuals living with life-threatening illnesses.