

Chocolate Factory returns to sugar-charge Valentine's Day

By Tim Keller — For the Comet | Posted: Wednesday, February 11, 2015 2:30 pm

RATON – A growing body of research suggests that chocolate has multiple health benefits — the Mayo Clinic's website reports reduced risk factors for heart disease, stroke, heart attack, and diabetes, aided by lowered blood pressure. For Valentine's weekend, you might do that gym workout, or you can enjoy all the chocolate you can eat at the 5th annual Chocolate Factory Friday evening at Raton High School. (Best idea: do both.)

Presented by the school's impressive FCCLA (Family, Career and Community Leaders of America) chapter, Chocolate Factory raises funds to send 12 of the group's members to the organization's New Mexico spring conference in Albuquerque March 4-7.

Chocolate Factory, presented with romantic low lighting and red tablecloths in the RHS library from 4 to 7:30 p.m. Friday evening (Feb. 13), is an all-you-can-eat self-serve chocolate buffet with a constantly restocked supply of 23 chocolate treats. There's also a constant chocolate fountain for dipping an endless supply of pretzels, strawberries, cherries and other fruits.

"Each of our 23 student members brings four batches of a chocolate recipe, usually made by the students or their mothers," says teacher Myra Baird. "I keep a master list so we avoid duplication. The student servers shuttle between the kitchen and the event keeping the plates filled. I have a brigade of adult helpers here in the kitchen to help keep it all moving."

Among Baird's preparations: ordering 100 pounds of strawberries for the popular chocolate fountain, provided by another of Baird's student groups, the RHS Culinary Arts catering team.

Past offerings have included chocolate-dipped Oreos, chocolate truffles, fudge pecan bars, black magic cake, chocolate-covered marshmallows, chocolate tarts, white-chocolate mice, peanut clusters, "dirt cups" (chocolate crumbs over chocolate pudding) and chocolate-almond candy with coconut.



From white-chocolate mice to cream puffs to cookies, Friday's 5th annual Chocolate Factory at Raton High School will provide a smorgasbord of chocolate confections. Puddings, donuts, cakes, brownies, fudge, and truffles join a chocolate fountain for dipping fruits, pretzels, and nuts—something for every chocoholic.

“We want people to come and enjoy the evening, with the romantic atmosphere and light,” Baird says, “but this year we’re also providing a take-out option because we’ve found that some people just can’t stay.

“There’s a night of basketball games in the gym Friday, along with demonstrations from a weeklong cheerleading clinic, so we know that a lot of people will be getting take-out to carry back to the gym. I’ve ordered a case of Chinese take-out containers this year.”

The dine-in option costs \$7 for all-you-can-eat. Children four and under eat free with a paid adult. The take-out option costs \$5 per filled Chinese take-out container.

Raton’s FCCLA students traveling to Albuquerque for the annual state spring conference include chapter president Ashlyn Martinez and state officer candidates Alyssa Aragon, Autumn Archuleta, Brianna Marquez, and Gabrielle Sanchez. STAR event participants include Ivy Fernandez, Lauren Romero, Sofia Maddaleni, Alejandro Esparza, and Jacob Hattaway. Jami Lopez and Natale Castellini round out Raton’s contingent of 12.

Chocolate Factory raises funds to help the students pay for transportation, rooms in the conference hotel, event registration, and meals.

The other FCCLA members providing chocolates Friday night are Ashley Atwater, Mia Maestas, Shania Sanchez, Camille Gonzales, Halle Medina, Olivia Ware, William Holland, Nayelli Acosta, Cheyann Duran, Adrianna Sanchez, and Reyes Aragon.

Jumpstart a heart-healthy Valentine’s weekend by jumping on a treadmill, or just walk from red tablecloth to red tablecloth, making the difficult decisions about which chocolates to enjoy at Friday evening’s 5th annual Chocolate Factory.