

# Faith, fame and future

**INSPIRED TO ACTION**  
FIRST DAY OF A THREE-DAY SERIES



Anna Jane Joyner during an interview with "Years of Living Dangerously" correspondent Ian Somerhalder. Joyner, of Asheville, will be featured in the Showtime series starting this spring. THE YEARS PROJECT/JOHN W. ADKISSON/SPECIAL TO THE CITIZEN-TIMES

## Local restaurants make room for all

Downtown Welcome Table defies typical soup kitchen model

By Mackensy Lunsford  
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ASHEVILLE — If there's a message to the Downtown Welcome Table, it's that everyone deserves to eat — and eat well.

The Downtown Welcome Table operates weekly at the

Haywood Street campus of Central United Methodist Church in Asheville. A dozen local restaurants help sponsor the effort and once a month they turn the family-style meal into high-caliber cuisine for as many as 400.

The Welcome Table isn't meant to be a standard soup kitchen, which is why meals are served on real china. The setup, through the congregation, is meant to "counter the notion often held by those living on the streets that hand-

outs, hand-me-downs and leftovers are 'all I deserve.'"

Elizabeth Button, an owner of Cúrate, was the first restaurateur to be approached by the Rev. Brian Combs who, with Shannon Spencer, leads the congregation and program. Button has since rallied her food-world brethren behind the cause.

According to Button, Combs had heard about celebrity chefs in Los Angeles volunteering to feed more than the well-heeled people in

their dining rooms. The city has several such programs, from L.A. Bites Hunger to the Meet Each Need with Dignity kitchen in Pacoima.

"And he thought, what a great thing for people who are never going to walk into our restaurants and buy a meal," she said. "To be able to experience restaurant food, and what that says about the community, about the way that we respect one another. I think

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