

Burgers for all

United Way Public Service Burger Lunch draws crowd, raises \$12,000

By Lance Coleman

Wednesday, September 22, 2010

The volunteers putting on the seventh annual United Way Public Service Hamburger Luncheon probably opted for pizza for a few days after last week's luncheon. In one day, they served more than 1,000 hamburgers, raising more than \$12,000 for the United Way of Blount County campaign.

The fundraiser was held Wednesday, Sept. 15, at the family life center of the First Baptist Church of Maryville.

Michelle Hanks, CEO and president of the United Way of Blount County, said it was another successful Public Service Hamburger Lunch, and she praised Circuit Court Tom Hatcher for heading up the event. "It is such a perfect example of the community coming together," she said.

Hatcher said there is a committee of about 10 people and who start in July getting things together for the lunch. Each person knows what they are doing and when to do it. "By the day before luncheon, we're in good shape," he said. "We start the night before for a 'Packing the Produce' party to bag the lettuce and tomatoes."

The circuit court clerk said the day of the event all the volunteers get to the church early to set up. This year everything was ready to go, and volunteers started grilling hamburgers at 9:30 a.m. Hatcher said he wasn't surprised by the strong turnout.

"It's another example of the people of Blount County taking care of people in Blount County and opening up their hearts and pocketbooks for any charitable cause no matter what it is," he said.

Hatcher said people from throughout the public service sector help, including the Circuit Court Clerk's office, Maryville and Alcoa Police Departments, the Blount County Sheriff's office. "It's a joint effort. We serve the public everyday, and this is part of what they do to give back," he said.

Dave Bennett, former Blount County finance director and now CEO of Cherokee

Millwright, was busy deep-frying Twinkies, a concept he introduced to the luncheon several years ago and continues to be popular with the lunch guests.

“United Way is near and dear to my heart. At the end of the day it is about the community coming together and helping people,” Bennett said.

United Way 2010 Campaign chair Greg Wilson thanked Hatcher.

“Tom and his staff are going a great job. They’re working hard, and it is exciting to be part of United Way. When you have an event like this with all the planning that goes into it, you want it to be successful,” he said. “There’s always the chance you won’t have the turnout, but today we had a great turnout, and I see a lot of enthusiasm for United Way. That’s why we’re all here.”

Pat McGill and Jackie Mills had fun catching up with friends at the lunch. “There’s no better way to support the community,” Mills said, to which McGill said. “We came to support United Way and get some (fried) Twinkies.”

Benny Kirby said the lunch supports a great cause. “Plus you get to see people you don’t always see,” he said.

Jim Scully said the lunch was well received by the community. “It’s always like a family reunion, and its good for the community,” he said.

Mark Russell said the luncheon is a good community event. “You see people you don’t usually see, and it brings the community together.”

Amy Campbell, a firefighter/engineer with Maryville Fire Department said, “We have a good time working with the different organizations to pull it all together.”

Tony Clark, firefighter/engineer, laughed and said they all had fun working the event. “We’re busy flipping burgers and solving the world’s problems.”



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