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Diners gather around the grill for United Way

Linda Braden Albert

Hold the pickle, hold the lettuce, but don't hold back in participating in United Way of Blount County's second annual Public Service Hamburger Luncheon next Wednesday.

For a very reasonable price of \$5, diners will be able to chow down on a grilled hamburger with all the fixings, chips and a drink at First Baptist Church, Maryville, on Lamar Alexander Parkway across from the Blount County Courthouse. Desserts will be available for an additional 50 cents.

"Of course, if anyone would like to make an additional donation, we will accept that, too," said Betsy Cunningham, who, in addition to her day job as Blount County's director of human resources, chairs the Public Service Division for United Way's 2005 campaign.

Don't have time for a sit-down meal? Just call ahead and a brown bag order will be ready and waiting, Cunningham said.

Tom Hatcher, Blount County Circuit Court clerk, was the originator of the idea to hold the inaugural luncheon last year.

"We started it sort of on a whim in the middle of the campaign," Hatcher said. "We wanted to emphasize the `service' in Public Service."

More than 500 people attended the event last year, which was planned in about a six-week period, Hatcher said. He is hoping for 800 this year.

As a special twist, participants are invited to bring non-perishable food items to be donated to public safety workers on the Gulf Coast. Hatcher said the police officers and others help everyone else in times of disaster, such as the recent hurricanes, but they are often forgotten as also being in need.

"We are putting the emphasis on helping the ones who are helping everybody else," he said.

All proceeds from the Hamburger Luncheon will be added to the United Way of Blount County 2005 campaign total.

Gas Day totals in

Jennifer Wackerhagen, vice president, communications and marketing with United Way of Blount County, announced that a total of \$8,899.21 was raised Sept. 23 during the annual Gas Day fund-raiser.

"We received \$4,606.25 from the oil companies, Downey, Calloway and McNutt, and \$4,292.96 in tips," Wackerhagen said.

The three Blount County oil companies donated 5 cents for each gallon of gasoline sold. The additional funds were tips given to volunteers who pumped gas and washed windshields.

The campaign total to date is \$808,496.57, which is 42.8 percent of the \$1.885 million goal. The campaign runs through Nov. 18.

If you go

United Way of Blount County will hold its 2nd Annual Public Service Hamburger Luncheon from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 12, at First Baptist Church of Maryville. Tickets are \$5 and includes a grilled hamburger, chips, drinks and all the fixings. Desserts will be available for 50 cents. Call ahead for carry-out orders the day of the luncheon to 363-8113. Tickets are available at United Way of Blount County, City of Alcoa Municipal Building, City of Maryville Municipal Building, Blount County Courthouse, Blount County Justice Center and local BB&T branch banks. All proceeds will benefit United Way of Blount County.
