

The Bandera PROPHEET

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Hundreds attend Medina Lake VFD BBQ and Auction

By Ron Clarke
The Bandera Prophet

At dawn on a recent cloudy Saturday morning, there was a hint of smoke in the air near Medina Lake. However, it was not the dangerous smoke that would trigger a first response from the Medina Lake Volunteer Fire Department. This smoke carried the teasing, special aroma of a Texas Barbeque and that smoke had been smoldering for three days. The Fire Department was there as always and ready to respond. But they were not going to extinguish this fire. In fact, they were stoking that fire in preparation for the hundreds of nearby residents of Lakehills and Bandera County who would attend the now-traditional largest fundraiser hosted by the Medina Lake VFD and its volunteers, the annual BBQ and live auction.

Preparation for the event began Thursday, as all auction items were being prepared along the building of the wood fire that would put that special bark on the BBQ.

At 11 a.m., the lines were already long for the standard BBQ fare of brisket, sausage, potato salad, beans, and all the sides. It would not be complete without Texas' famous iced tea.

“This fundraiser is our primary source of income, as we do not receive any funding from the county or state. Our finances are covered exclusively by donations from our community residents and businesses. All the money we obtain is through donations and donations alone. We couldn't do this without the support of our community. We believe in our motto of 'Neighbors Helping Neighbors,' and we appreciate our local business sponsors such as Hudson's Automotive and RMC Productions

for their support. We certainly want to thank each person who donates to us each year and for all the donations for today's Auction. All support, no matter how small or how large is appreciated," Medina Lake VFD President Captain Greg Spengler said.

Spengler's comments were echoed by Scott Hudson, owner of Hudson's Automotive in Pipe Creek, who stated, "We have been in the community for four years and we believe in supporting non-profit organizations such as this Fire Department. A lot of us don't understand how much support it takes to make this type of organization run. We at Hudson's learned more about it as we have talked a lot with these volunteer firefighters and decided we wanted to help them after understanding what they do for our community. Some of these firefighters use their own vehicles and their own gasoline to respond to our emergencies. It takes a lot of volunteer support and financial support to take care of this Department, this facility, this equipment, and these volunteers. We at Hudson's are proud to support our local non-profits as they support us. It is of benefit to all of us if we can help in any way, we should all work together to get it done."

Lakehills Sno-Cone owner Carlos Cantu returned this year to provide free sno-cones to veterans and first responders.

"We all must do our part. If we don't jump in and help, who will? I am happy to be here again to meet my community neighbors and to support this fire department as much as they support us," Cantu said.

Javier Salinas is a community member, and also a volunteer firefighter with the Medina Lake VFD.

"It's important to volunteer in the community. If we as community members don't volunteer – who will? We need anyone who can help us, to join us. They do not necessarily have to keep odd hours or respond to fight fires. There are many opportunities within our department where someone can help. It is not just about firefighting. There are support roles within the department that are just as important as responding to an emergency. Each volunteer is important," Salinas said.

In fact, Medina Lake Volunteer Fire Department is one of more than 18,000 Volunteer Fire Departments across the United States; 1,998 of

those volunteer departments serve the communities of the Lone Star State. This means that 67 percent of fire departments in the United States are covered by unpaid and solely volunteer fire service. There are about 26,600 fire departments across the United States, but less than 8,000 are fully staffed by paid firefighters. The rest are volunteers serving their respective communities as unpaid first responders in more than 10,000 volunteer departments. In Texas, the volunteer firefighter often achieves the same certifications, EMS training, and fire service training as paid fire department staff. Many of these fire departments not only volunteer, but work tirelessly to bolster financial support for their departments by events such as Medina Lakes annual BBQ and Auction.

Tom “Grumpy” Kral is a volunteer for the Medina Lake Volunteer Fire Department. “Grumpy” is a senior citizen and a retired U.S. Army medical Officer, “Grumpy” said being a volunteer who does not respond and works in a support role is “just as important as manning a hose or working an accident scene. They contribute in other ways such as this event today. You won’t believe how many hours it takes to put on such an event as this. So, a volunteer can help in a lot of ways for our community. We ask that our community support us in volunteering, but also ask for financial help which amounts to about \$3 a month per household, for which you get a superb fire department with the best equipment, and highly trained most loyal firefighters around. We enjoy this annual event, even though it’s demanding work we get to meet those we serve as neighbors helping neighbors.”

After the delicious BBQ, the live auction began as hundreds of vendor-donated and individual items went up for auction in front of a bidding audience of more than 200. The auctioneer was lively, and the items took over an hour and a half to be sold off.

To learn more about the Medina Lake Volunteer Fire Department, go to their Facebook page, or visit www.medinalakevfd.com. They are a 501(C)3 IRS Tax Exempt Charitable Organization and all donations are tax deductible. All donations directly support the MLVFD’s mission of

providing first responder and fire protection to the Medina Lake area, supporting with mutual aid other Bandera County Fire Departments. Hudson's Automotive is located at 6502 FM 1283, located next to Hill Country Elementary. You can find them on Facebook or call them at 210-684-8000.

You can reach Lakehills Sno-Cone by calling Carlos at 210-823-4265.