The Bandera Prophet

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43rd annual Medina Lake Cajun Festival a rousing success story

The Lakehills Civic Center announced this year's Cajun Festival was phenomenally successful. Of note was the huge increase in the number of Gumbo Cook-Off participants, with the addition of seven area school's culinary arts programs.

The Gumbo Cook Off was the original concept behind the now full-fledged Cajun Festival. It was in 1981 that the first Medina Lake Gumbo Cook-Off was held, and the Medina Lake Cajun festival was born. In 2024, with more than 80 vendors, five bands, and the best Cajun food west of Louisiana, the festival was well-attended by locals, as well as people from all over the world. Some came as far as from New Mexico, Europe, Louisiana, Wyoming, and even Canada to enjoy the best Cajun Festival in Texas.

"What was started as simple quick gumbo cook-off fundraiser to help the struggling Lakehills Community Center 43 years ago has blossomed into the best and biggest Cajun Festival Event in Texas. Each year new features are added causing the Festival to get larger. The Lakehills Community Center is where it is today, and even expanding thanks to this all-volunteer Festival. We are proud to host it each year and our volunteers make the difference. It's hard to beat anywhere the more than 400 volunteers who give more than 9,000 hours of their time to us to make this event and our biggest fundraiser a success. They start working hard 6 months prior to the Festival, and even as we finish this year's event, we are beginning to plan and improve next year's event. There is no way we would be this successful without the support of our community, each volunteer, and all the vendors and businesses that help make it a success. We were happy to see so many return visitors to the Festival this year who enjoyed all the truly authentic Cajun and

Louisiana cuisine that is hand- made by these dedicated volunteers," Cajun Festival Director Barbara Engel said.

"The more than 400 volunteers who support the Cajun Festival directly support the mission of the Lakehills Community Center, which is to provide service to Lakehills and Bandera County residents. This is the second year that our Volunteer Coordinator Jessica Salinas has done a fantastic job in organizing and making sure each portion and part of the Cajun Festival was covered and tasked to a volunteer. Those 400 volunteers, some of whom have been working with the Cajun Festival for over 40 years are giving of their time and their efforts – selflessly. The Cajun Festival uses no paid staff, but an all-volunteer event. Without this talented team of volunteers as well as our business vendor supporter for now over 43 years, we wouldn't have been able to achieve another successful, but 'fun-raiser' for the Community Center," Community Center and Cajun Festival Publicity Coordinator Ron Clarke said.

The Lakehills Civic Center provides an outlet for a variety of events monthly including quilting; Hearts for Art painting and artwork social groups; Friends Night Out, a social event for singles and couples; recently added popular Pickle Ball; yoga; cooking classes; club meetings; support of 4H; community dances; weekly and monthly dinner for seniors; and much more. To see more information about the Lakehills Community Center, visit their website at www.lakehillscommunitycenter.org.

The Cajun Festival is held each fourth Saturday of September at the Lakehills Community Center complex. For more information, visit the Cajun Festival Website at www.cajunfestival-medinalake.com. The Cajun Festival accepts volunteers for the Festival all year round. Volunteer at 830-460-0600.