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Community responds full force to help LCSO Lt. Scott Finnen



Brooke Ellzey Willis takes an order over the phone and waits on a diner who has come to help at the fundraiser on Thursday (Nov. 2).

Story and Photos

By Jeff M. Hardison © Nov. 4, 2017 at 3:07 p.m.

WILLISTON -- A community effort to conduct a barbecue fundraiser succeeded Thursday (Nov. 2) as law enforcement officers, firefighters, EMS personnel, city, county and other elected officials, and members of the general public bought every possible barbecue lunch made.



Levy County Court Judge Tim Browning prepares to enjoy his lunch. The judge chose against selecting from a wide assortment of desserts that were available. His drink is out of the picture too, but drinks were included in the meals at the fire station.

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A line of donors reaches beyond those seen in this photo. The team of volunteer workers in the event moved people through the process of paying and picking up their meals very quickly.



Williston Fire Rescue Lt. Larry Neal stands next to Brooke Ellzey Willis on the serving line. In the background on the right are two University of Florida broadcast journalism students who came to cover the event for WUFT-TV.

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WFR Logistics Manager Danny Wallace, who like some number of other folks politely tolerates *HardisonInk.com* photographer Jeff M. Hardison taking his picture despite not really wanting that to happen, prepares to load and deliver lunches.

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Levy County Undersheriff Brett Beauchamp (green apron) is one of the helpers in the making of the meat for sandwiches. LCSO Col. Mike Sheffield (on the right, mostly out of the photo), is another helper. The pitmasters are Williston Fire Rescue Lt. Jimmy Willis Jr. and WFR Lt. Kenneth Maddox. The Willis-Maddox team are from Money Pit Barbecue.



(from left) LCSO Deputy M. Weeks, Chiefland City Manager Mary Ellzey and Levy County Sheriff Bobby McCallum are part of the assembly crew for dinners.

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Pitmasters Williston Fire Rescue Lt. Jimmy Willis Jr. (left) and WFR Lt. Kenneth Maddox are able to pause for a second to provide a photo opportunity, just moments after being in the heat of the action. Their cooking skills started many hours before this picture was taken Thursday, afternoon. The Money Pit Barbecue guys have been part of the big team of people who help raise funds for people.



Three leaders in Levy County law enforcement are seen here. They are (from left) Levy County Sheriff's Office Col. Mike Sheffield, Sheriff Bobby McCallum and Undersheriff Brett Beauchamp. All three of these gentlemen served as helpers in the effort to create wonderful barbecue meals in this

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fundraiser.



Levy County Sheriff Bobby McCallum (left) stands with his friend and neighbor Gilchrist County Sheriff Bobby Schultz at the fundraising event in Williston on Thursday.



Lt. Scott Finnen's parents James and Laila Finnen were among the many guests at the event on Thursday.

The people brought money not only for a great barbecue dinner but to help an excellent man Levy County Sheriff's Office Lt. Scott Finnen.

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Lt. Finnen has been diagnosed with a rare disease, and he has undergone surgery, required more than 20 units of blood and is experiencing other expenses as a result of this health issue.

Scott and his wife Michelle Finnen are well-known in Levy County and beyond as being great people. So it is no wonder support was strong.

And the outpouring of love and support was anticipated.

Williston Fire Rescue Logistics Manager Danny Wallace mentioned that not only was their enough meat brought by WFR Lt. Jimmy Willis Jr. and WFR Lt. Kenneth Maddox – The Pitmasters of Money Pit Barbecue – for the 300 meals, but other members of the fire and rescue department brought in more meat.

And it's a good thing they did, because Brooke Ellzey Willis – a leader in this fundraising effort – said there was a sellout if meals at this lunch. And, she added as she looked back at the line relatively early in the event on Thursday, there may be some disappointed people at the end of the line.

Everyone enjoyed this well-priced (\$10 per meal), delicious barbecue lunch while they helped to support a great family.

Speaking of family, Scott's parents James and Laila Finnen were at this barbecue too. The list of people who came to help is long enough to fill a small phonebook.

Among the donors who went beyond the \$10-per-meal donation was the AmVets Riders 422 of Chiefland. They donated \$100 – meal-free.

The scene of the lunch production, distribution and dining was at the Williston Fire Rescue Department (WFR), 5 S.W. First Ave. in Williston. It was a big day for positive cooking in Williston again.

The group sponsoring this fundraising event is comprised of people from the WFR, the Levy County Sheriff's Office, the Williston Police Department and Money Pit Barbecue.