



Two win in Gilchrist County Sheriff's Office chili contest

Gilchrist County Sheriff Bobby Schultz presents Susie Caulk with her trophy as the overall winner of the competition.

Story and Photos
By Terry Witt, Senior
Reporter © Feb. 17, 2018 at
4:08 p.m.

TRENTON -- There were 28 chili chefs competing Friday (Feb. 16) in the 9th Annual Gilchrist County Sheriff's Office cook-off.



Kristal Holley and Julee Brideson dish out the chili samples to the judges.

HardisonInk.com



Chili judges (from left) Trip Lancaster, Robert Willis and Michelle Walker-Crawford taste chili samples in the early going.



The chili entries line an entire wall of the Trenton Woman's Club and part of another wall.

HardisonInk.com



This chili entry (left) Just Waiting on the Trophy, drew quite a few chuckles.

Chili 3-PO (below) was touted as having traveled the universe searching for the best cancer fighting ingredients. The elaborate marquis was part of the fun.

Susie Caulk and Kristen Hite earned the two top honors from among those 28 entries.

Caulk won Best Overall Chili and Hite won with the Most Unique Chili. The event, held at the Trenton Woman's Club, was sponsored by the Gilchrist County Sheriff's Office Relay for Life Team. Proceeds will benefit the American Cancer Society.

Fanning Springs Mayor Trip Lancaster, Gilchrist County District 3 School Board Member Michelle Walker-Crawford and Assistant State Attorney Robert Willis, division chief for the Gilchrist County office of Eighth Judicial Circuit State Attorney William Cervone, served as chili judges.

"Cancer is something that affects all of us," Gilchrist County Sheriff Bobby



HardisonInk.com

Schultz said. "We can never do enough to fight this disease."

The event was nearly overshadowed by the closing of Gilchrist County Schools following an emailed threat to the school district. The sheriff's office was notified of the threat at 8:30 p.m. Thursday night.

Schultz said he consulted with school officials and a decision was made to close the schools to protect students. Schools will remain closed on Monday due to the planned holiday for Presidents Day. Students will return on Wednesday as a result of Tuesday being a planned day off for students, although it is a teacher workday. Actually, as of Saturday, the schedules all returned to normal.

"Our schools were shut down today because of the threat. We're using an abundance of caution when it comes to our babies," Schultz said.

Schultz said the threat was specific to Gilchrist County schools. The sheriff said it is not financially feasible to station deputies in every school.

Walker-Crawford said the decision to close the schools was made because the threat arrived late and many families and their children were already in bed for the night. Schultz said the late night threat didn't give law enforcement time to vet the email and attempt to find out who sent it. He said they may never know who sent it.

Walker-Crawford said the School Board was aware that there could be a copycat incident. She was referring to the Broward County shooting at a public school on Wednesday.

Walker-Crawford, who has a daughter teaching at Trenton High School, said students practice drills for emergencies like this one. Teachers and students know how to find a safe place to hide.

On a more positive note, Susie Caulk, the overall winner, said her winning chili entry was the first in the nine year history of the contest. She didn't know she was supposed to name her chili, so when she arrived she was told to give it a name. Since the chili was in a Gator crockpot, she named it Gator Chili.

Some of the other entries had colorful names including "Tongue in Cheek, No really, Just Waiting on the Trophy, Hog's Breath, The Little Burro Sweet with a Little kick, Suwannee Kicker and Junkyard Chili."

It was all in fun.

She said she has no secret recipe.

"It was just traditional chili. I don't put extras in it, just tomatoes, beans and hamburger meat, salt and pepper," she said.

Caulk, a nurse tech and unit clerk at North Florida Regional Hospital in Gainesville, said she enjoys entering cakes at the chili cook-off cake auction, which is also part of the fund-raising effort for the Relay for Life. She has entered a cake every year of the event. She enjoys doing charity work and is a strong supporter of Sheriff Schultz.

"We have a great sheriff and I like to support him and the cancer society," she said. "I had a couple of my grandkids there today. They saw Nanna win the contest. That was extra special."