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## Church reaches out to community with chili and chicken wings



Senior Pastor Eugene Strickland (left) and Associate Pastor David Shepard stand in front of the inflatable bounce house and slide as children enjoy the huge toys at Pleasant Hill Baptist Church.

### Story and Photos



By Jeff M. Hardison ©  
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p.m.

**GILCHRIST COUNTY** – One chili creation and one chicken wings recipe each scored a \$100 prize, one for each.

**Fanning Springs Community Church Associate Pastor Alan Harmon (left) and Senior Pastor David Jones are present to lend support.**

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Beyond the contest for the nine entrees of chili and three entrees of chicken wings, the event Sunday afternoon brought members of the community to Pleasant Hill Baptist Church, just as the pastors and congregation had hoped.

Senior Pastor Eugene Strickland and Associate Pastor David Shepard welcomed everyone to Pleasant Hill Baptist Church as part of the community outreach event. This was not a fundraiser. Everything was free.

With this being their first-ever food contest, the organizers realized they had not set a deadline for the entrees. In fact, the ninth version of chili came in even after it was learned that one of three planned judges had fallen ill just shortly before the official starting time of 3 p.m. for the contest.

This Chili & Wing Fling Cook-off at Pleasant Hill Baptist Church, in Bell, was in partnership with Fanning Springs Community Church.

Fanning Springs Community Church Senior Pastor David Jones and Associate Pastor Alan Harmon were present to lend support to their brothers and sisters in Christ.

Pastor Strickland called up Pastor Jones to provide the prayer of blessing and thanks for the food, and for the fellowship.



**Gilchrist County Commissioner Todd Gray (left) and Gilchrist County Sheriff Bobby Schultz provide a photo opportunity next to a couple of crock pots in the Fellowship Hall of Pleasant Hill Baptist Church of Bell. There was a period of time when they were the only two judges, due to the third scheduled judge Rep. Chuck Clemons calling in ill.**

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**And then there were three. (from left) County Commissioner Todd Gray, Susannah Gray, 17, his daughter, and Sheriff Bobby Schultz are the three judges of chili and chicken wings on Sunday afternoon (March 3) at Pleasant Hill Baptist Church.**

Guest judges were Gilchrist County Commissioner Todd Gray, and Gilchrist County Sheriff Bobby Schultz.

When Florida State Representative Chuck Clemons (R-Newberry, Dist. 21) called in sick, 17-year-old Bell High School 11th grader Susannah Gray was asked to volunteer as a judge, and she accepted this important duty.

All of the judges tasted, smelled and carefully considered the various aspects of the foods they were judging.

After the dishes were judged, everyone was invited to partake of the chili and chicken wings.

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**(from left) Jim Harvey, Shirlene Harvey, Jim Langford and Buddy Rhoden are among the musical performers of the day. They played and sang Gospel music, bringing joy to, and uplifting everyone, at the event.**



**Jim Langford (left) speaks with Elijah Langford about playing the guitar. The two people are probably kin; however, until a journalist asked them for their names, they did not know they were both from the Langford family. If *Ancestry.com* staff members**

**had been there, those folks could have taken notes about the two lineages from these guys.**

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**Nine chili samples and are seen here in front of a judge. Those are celery stalks to the left. There was also Ranch dressing for the wings, and if needed, there were Tums.**

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It may look a little stark, but these are three separate samples of different chicken wings in front of a judge.



As requested by *HardisonInk.com*, Alan Harmon (tall, blue shirt), a visiting associate pastor, leans in as people take pictures of the judges eating and judging the food.

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Fans of the judges take photos as they determine the best chili and the best chicken wings.



Deep in concentration all three judges taste, think and record their evaluations of the food.

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**Brenda and Tom Grotegut are the winners with their Chili.**

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**Sally Ford, the winner of the best Chicken Wings, holds up one finger. Love is the answer. There's a story behind this photo. The photographer told the winner he was going to take three photos. This is one, he said, and she put her hand up just like him. While this was not the intention, it turns out this was the best photo. Love is the answer, and she is pointing up...**

The event was very relaxed and fun for all of the participants. Of course, the judges had the tough job because all of the entrants did their best to create their dishes.

There was a bounce house and inflatable slide for young people to enjoy outside. There was live gospel music performed by Jim Harvey, Jim Langford and Buddy Rhoden, all on guitars, and Shirlene Harvey singing. There may have been other musicians performing as well.

The winner of the Best Chili prize was the team of Brenda and Tom Grotegut. Darlene Hernandez placed second with her chili.

The winner of the Best Chicken Wings prize was Sally Ford. Ashley Hernandez placed second with her chicken wings