Fast recipe for granting wishes

JASON SPIESS
For Bakken Breakout Weekly

Three years ago, two MBI Energy Services employees had an idea that would incorporate the resources of the energy companies, the community they live and work in and the momentum of the Bakken's brand. From inception of thought to grilling ribs at the first Bakken Make-A-Wish BBQ was a short six weeks.

"Jackie and I started this event three years ago and had no idea what we were doing," said Tiffany Steiner, with MBI Energy Services. "We kinda just threw it together and six weeks later we had a thousand or so people show up and we raised 40- to 50-thousand dollars. Very impressive for six weeks of work."

Steiner added that an event like the Bakken Make-A-Wish BBQ could not happen without the support of the oil and gas companies, the community and MBI Energy Service's internal flexible staff.

In the past years, a trophy and bragging rights have been awarded for the best barbecue. Jackie Schmidt, also with MBI Energy Services, said this year's competition is bigger and more diverse than in the past two years.

"We are expecting about 4,000 people this year and have about 15 companies committed so far," Schmidt said. "In addition to the meats and side dishes, this year we have company with a guy who is from Louisiana and will be making French Creole. So I am pretty excited to see everything that is new and different this year."

In terms of barbecue bravado, Steiner said many of the companies "are in it to win it" this year with surprises and new competition dishes.

"A lot of the companies are very secretive about what they are making. They are getting their A game ready for this year's event," Steiner said. "There is a big trophy and, of course, bragging rights."

Past winners include Light Tower Rentals with a barbecue grilled chicken pasta entry and J&J Operating with ribs, which Schmidt called "phenomenal." Steiner quickly addressed any thoughts about a good ol' boys judging panel for the barbecue trophy.

"We have 15 judges who have four hours to go around and try everyone's food and determine which barbecue is the best," Steiner said. "It will be a rating system so no one can cheat."

In the past, plates filled up quickly as attendees walked past a sea of smoke, salads, custom grills and meat-filled rib bones. Schmidt joked about the generosity of the sponsoring and supporting companies' interpretation of portion sizes.

"We try to tell the companies bite size, but it ends up being a plateful," Schmidt said.

Nationally recognized singer, speaker, entertainer and author Mark Lindquist will kick off this year's event with the national anthem. Lindquist recently sang at the Fargo Marathon and at the Minnesota Vikings home opener last year. Lindquist is scheduled to sing the national anthem at the College World Series in Omaha the night before the fundraising event in Dickinson.

"I am very excited to be a part of the third annual Make-A-Wish barbecue event in Dickinson," Lindquist said. "The support from community, the oil and gas industry and supporting companies is humbling. To be asked to participate in this fundraising event is truly an honor."

Through travels and gigs, Lindquist landed small roles on ABC's "LOST," CBS' "Hawaii Five-O" and the Universal Studios movie "Battleship." Lindquist also travels the country delivering keynote addresses for businesses, colleges, young professionals networks, conferences and school assemblies.

The third annual Bakken Make-A-Wish BBQ will be held 4-11 p.m. MDT Friday, June 19, in the Dickinson Rec Center parking lot. The cost of $15 per person includes a drink coupon; children 10 and under receive free admission. The event is open to the public and all proceeds go to the Make-A-Wish North Dakota.

The event is advertised to offer a variety of barbecue food, live music from Fargo-based The Roosters, face painting, jumping castles and other family entertainment and activities.

The event will also feature a raffle drawing with multiple prizes, including a weekend trip to Las Vegas and a grand prize of a Polaris Razor RZR. Raffle tickets are $10.

All the money raised including ticket sales will go directly to the fundraiser. This year's goal is $100,000 for Make-A-Wish North Dakota.

"Make-A-Wish grants wishes to children and adults that have life-threatening diseases," Steiner said. "For example, there are a number of the children who want to go to Disney World, so they are able to grant that wish to go see Mickey or Minnie or whatever their little dream is."

Steiner said the number of families in the Stark County area surprised her this year.

"I think the Make-A-Wish has 14 families in our area," Steiner said. "Which is very surprising to me and very sad."

Steiner said she and Schmidt have been communicating with the local families to learn more about their situation and invite them to the event.

"We are hoping to get as many of the Make-A-Wish families to the Bakken BBQ so they can enjoy a little fun," Steiner said.

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Submitted photo
Mark Lindquist sings the national anthem at Ralph Engelstad Arena before a University of North Dakota hockey game.

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