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Education Foundation barbecue raises funds, fun

By Bridget Jones, Journal Staff Writer

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Bridget Jones/Auburn Journal

Eric, 8, Caden, 4 months and Skylyn, 7, take a break from their meal at E.V. Cain's Western Roundup barbecue Thursday.

Auburn schools and Old Town Pizza owner Ed Browning were the big winners at a Western-style barbecue Thursday, hosted by the Auburn Education Foundation at E.V. Cain Middle School.

The barbecue is one of two dinners hosted by the Auburn Education Foundation each year to raise money for the Auburn Union Elementary School District.

These events fund the dreams of teachers throughout the district, said Shirley Paris, E.V. Cain teacher and event co-chairwoman.

"The Auburn Education Foundation was established over 20 years ago, and the purpose was to be a support system for the things teachers were passionate about in their classrooms," Paris said. "This dinner honors the original vision."

The foundation offers these funds back to the district in the form of grants twice a year, and the proceeds from this dinner will determine what grants can be offered in the spring, Paris said.

"It reminds us that schools are the center of our communities," Paris said.

The E.V. Cain Dragila Gym was alive with chatting families, laughing children and the smells of barbecued ribs, chicken and hamburgers wafting through the air.

Auburn Rotary was grilling, and this crew meant business. With 500 guests expected, the grillers were ready with 75 chickens, 30 slabs of pork ribs and 80 hamburgers as well as salad, French bread and beans, head chef and Auburn Rotary member Virgil Traynor said.

The foundation ended up selling about 400 tickets and cooking 350 meals, Auburn Education Foundation President Ken Nittler said.

Nittler said Thursday there was an air of excitement in the gym, and he was very grateful to the people who made it happen.

"The first reaction I've heard ... we've greatly upgraded the quality of the food," Nittler said. "People are excited about our iPod raffle. The food service people here have been tremendous to help us organize this, and the Rotary barbecue people."

The Apple iPod Touch drawing was a highlight of the evening, with Old Town Pizza owner Ed Browning taking home the prize.

Those in attendance were also able to participate in a silent auction and raffle, and experience the music of E.V. Cain's honor band.

While the dinner took place on the same night as the vice presidential debate, there was an easy solution for those who still wanted to enjoy the barbecue — take-out was offered all evening.

Attendees had very positive feelings about the event.

"I think the organization is wonderful, how much they help the teachers," Auburn resident and mother Jennifer Kepfer said. "Usually the teachers use the money to pour it back into the kids."

Auburn resident and mother Meredith Stafslie said the barbecue was a fun way to get community members to support local schools.

"My son goes to school here and I just like to support the education program any way we can," Stafslie said. "This is a fun, family-oriented way to raise money."

The event raised about \$4,000 to \$5,000, Nittler said.

"We did very well, given everything considered," Nittler said. "I'm tickled to death that it worked out as well as it did."

The Journal's Bridget Jones can be reached at bridgetj@goldcountrymedia.com.



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Keywords

Auburn Education Foundation, E.V. Cain Middle School, Auburn Rotary Club, Shirley Paris, Virgil Traynor, Ken Nittler

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