

J's Market Grill gives back this holiday season

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
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ALTON - One owner of a **Washington Avenue** barbecue joint was upset when the city removed the benches near the bus stop, and wanted to do something to help the homeless.

Jason Harrison, owner of **J's Market Grill**, said the removal of those benches would make life harder for homeless people in the area, who utilize those benches to take a rest. To help them have a better holiday season, Harrison decided to take a step further than a traditional turkey giveaway. On the day before Thanksgiving this year, Harrison and the staff of J's Market Grill smoked 20 turkeys and gave them to anyone who needed them, with the first bird being reserved for individuals Harrison knew to be homeless.

"**Timothy Samuels**, our catering manager, bought a turkey and brought it back to the shop to smoke it, and give those people some food," Harrison said. "We them come first and we fed them."

Harrison said around five individuals were able to share that turkey and enjoy a few sides and desserts together. The rest of the turkeys were smoked at the restaurant and given to anyone who needed one. Harrison said he intended on doing something similar for Christmas with hams instead of turkeys. He said he would be hosting a prepared ham giveaway on Dec. 24. Anyone who is in need of a ham for Christmas is invited to attend.

"They're for anyone who needs them," Harrison said. "We don't do an ID check or anything like that. It's one thing to be poor, but when you have to prove how poor you are to someone, it's worse."

As many as 20 hams will be purchased by Harrison for the giveaway. He said customers to J's Market Grill added to the turkey giveaway, so more hams could be a possibility.

"We had customers come in and bring us turkeys they had purchased themselves," he said. "At the end of the day we still had more people than turkeys to give away."

Originally, Harrison had 10 turkeys to give to those in need. He decided to smoke turkeys instead of giving them away raw because some people do not have the means to cook a turkey, whether it is because they do not have electricity or a working stove.

"We're trying to give back to our community, because without them, we wouldn't have a business," Harrison said.

J's Market Grill is located at 1808 Washington Ave.

