

Comin' in hot: Alton Salvation Army hosts Pork Steaktacular

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
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ALTON - Alton Salvation Army Corps Kettle Coordinator Greg Gelzinnis hopes to sell as many as 500 pork steaks during the **Salvation Army Pork Steaktacular**.

The Pork Steaktacular is this year's push by the **Alton Salvation Army Corps** to meet their \$85,000 goal. Gelzinnis said an anonymous donor gave \$5,000 to the campaign with the hopes the Salvation Army and its merry group of bell-ringers could match it. Gelzinnis is confident he can help that drive by selling pork steak dinners until they are out of meat.

"It's sort of a publicity stunt," Gelzinnis said. "Everybody has to eat, so we'll be serving up lunches and dinners until eight each night."

The event began the morning of Thursday, Dec. 22, and will continue until Friday at 8 p. m. or until there are no more pork steaks left to serve, whichever comes first. Gelzinnis said the event will act as a sort of party for the **Alton Salvation Army Corps's Red Kettle Campaign** finale at 2 p.m. Saturday. Gelzinnis said, as of Tuesday, Dec. 20, the community had given as much as \$63,000. He said this year's campaign has seen more significant donations than previous years.

"We're looking forward to a big push through Saturday," Gelzinnis said. "I feel really confident this year. The community has really stepped up. We're seeing more larger bills in our kettles as a rule of thumb."

During the Pork Steaktacular, members of the community are invited by Gelzinnis to come to the Alton Salvation Army Corps Booth House, located at 525 Alby St., and pay \$8 for a one-pound pork steak, their choice of chips and a beverage. Gelzinnis said \$5 of every order would go directly to the Salvation Army. The remaining \$3 will go toward the supplies for the event. Gelzinnis said the pork steaks and chips were purchased at a discount from **Shop-N-Save**, a business Gelzinnis said has been very helpful with the Salvation Army's drives. Drinks were donated by **Dr. Pepper**, and **Metro Supply** provided the carry-out containers.

A homemade grill created by the **Main Street United Methodist Church's Men's Ministry** was utilized for the herculean task of cooking all of the pork steaks. The 500 gallon drum grill was built by the group late last summer. Ministry member **Bob Carter** volunteered to take the first shift of steak cooking Thursday morning.

"I've probably cooked about a hundred pork steaks this morning," Carter said just before noon Thursday.

Main Street United Methodist Church's Men's Ministry Chairperson Terry Steward said he was happy to lend the grill to Gelzinnis for the Pork Steaktacular.

"Our family has had a long history with the Salvation Army, and when Greg asked, I was happy to do whatever I could to make this event a success and help them reach their goal," he said in a release. "As the men of Main Street , it is our hope that this grill can be used at many events throughout the year to bring the community together."

Several members of the community stopped by the grill to purchase pork steaks, many of whom were attracted by the smell. **Alton Police Chief Jason "Jake" Simmons** purchased an order and told Carter and Gelzinnis he would send some of his officers down for some more for lunch and dinner later.

The Pork Steaktacular is not Gelzinnis's first step into the world of publicity stunts for the greater good. Last year, in the days leading to the final day of the campaign, Gelzinnis braved wind storms and frigid temperatures to stay in a lift for 24 hours. He said he did that to bring awareness to the struggle of the homeless and hungry in the winter time. This year, he said, he felt like the event should be more of a celebration.

"We're a lot closer to our goal this year, so I thought we could have a celebration," he said. "This Pork Steaktacular could flow all the way to our revealing Saturday. We may fire up the Salvation Army and start serving hot chocolate later."