

# Ham for the holidays: Local eatery gives Christmas dinner to those in need

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December 25 2016 5:02 AM



**ALTON** - An essential part of Christmas dinner was given to 25 Riverbend families in need Saturday afternoon.

**J's Market Grill** owner **Jason Harrison** and his chief catering partner **Timothy Samuels** gave as many as 25 smoked hams to anyone who dropped into the restaurant in

need. Harrison said he and Samuels started smoking the meats around 5:30 a.m. Saturday on the restaurant's grill. Harrison said they purchased 10 of the hams from Ruler Foods using their own money. The remaining 15 were donated by members of the community or purchased through community donations.

"Our goal is to help out the less fortunate who are not sure how they can give their family a ham this Christmas," Harrison said. "I don't know how he finds the right people, but he does. I posted about it on Facebook, but he walks around and finds just the right people who are most in need."

Harrison did not require people coming into his barbecue joint to prove they were in need. He allowed them to take a pre-cooked ham through the honor system. If they came, they could choose to leave with a ham.

"All they have to do is put it in the oven for a little bit to warm it up," he said. "We took care of cooking each and every one of them."

Life experience is what Harrison said inspired he and Samuels to put forth their effort. He said the two of them knew poverty through going without when they were younger.

"We have gone through it," he said. "We know what it's like to struggle. I want to show my appreciation to God for what we do have."

The restaurant also gave away as many as 25 smoked turkeys last Thanksgiving. Food giveaways on the holidays will become the usual for J's Market Grill, Harrison assured. He said the next giveaway may be as soon as Easter.

"What a better way to show appreciation for God and his son," Harrison said.