

COULD TOP \$400,000: Queen of Hearts becomes 'king' in Eldred on Tuesday nights

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ELDRED - Queen of Hearts has become king in the small rural community of Eldred on Tuesday nights.

Thousands have been turning out for the drawings and the next one, set for Aug. 7, is speculated to top \$400,000. The Queen of Hearts game is literally putting Eldred on the map for many people who have never been to the community.

Queen of Hearts is a game where players buy raffle tickets for a weekly drawing. Raffle organizers hang a bulletin board with playing cards randomly placed in rows, turned over. Each card gets labeled with a number. Players buy raffle tickets each week, usually around \$1 apiece, write a number on their raffle ticket and drop it in a bucket.

The person whose ticket is drawn gets to pick a card. If the card selected is the Queen of Hearts, the player wins the pot. If another card is drawn, it's thrown out and the game continues the next week with what's left of the deck.

Eldred American Legion Post 1135 Commander Jon Baker said he discovered the idea after visiting a Queen of Hearts game that was held in Caseyville.

"The first place I went was Caseyville and they had \$440,000 with their drawing," he said. "They had eight or 10 tables selling tickets at the bar during the day and evening."

Beer sales have been strong at the Queen of Hearts, with Baker said an estimated 6,000 cans sold the last Tuesday.

Eldred Mayor Jim Darr and Michelle Darr, his wife, said the Queen of Hearts game has created literally "outrageous results" for the community.

"It is big money for businesses in town and the Legion," he said. "Everything has gone smooth so far and the results have been great. We haven't had any problems at all."

Darr said Eldred will use the funds from the game to work on parks for the kids and sidewalks.

"We are a good, little quiet town and look at all these folks having a good time," he said.

Jim and Michelle said together: "It is peaceful here. It is good for the Legion and a benefit to Eldred. The Legion is making a lot of money and making changes."

American Legion Post 1135 has been conducting a Queen of Hearts drawing to raise money for the organization. Participants pay \$1 per entry and then pick a number of a playing card that has not been picked in a previous week. If no one picks the winning

card (Queen of Hearts), the jackpot continues to grow as more people buy tickets for the next drawing. On the day the shown images were captured, the winner could have received over \$300,000.

No one selected the right card number during the last Tuesday of the drawing, so the correct pick now could be worth over \$400,000 by Aug. 7. The evening of the drawing fills the town with people from all over the region hoping to win the game. A few buses have driven as far away as Chicago to participate in the Queen of Hearts.

Shannon Dunham is originally from Eldred. She is now a practicing attorney in St. Louis and specializes in business and corporate law.

"I have been down here every week since it went over \$100,000," Dunham said. "I am originally from Eldred. The Queen of Hearts draws back everyone and people from all over. It is always good to see money go to the local folks. People watching is the most exciting thing for me here."

Dunham likely summed up what everyone thinks about on Tuesday nights in Eldred: "I love getting to see people daydreaming about winning the money and what they might do."



