

Residents enjoy sausage from centuries-old recipe

Fundraising event to benefit St. Joseph School in Slaton

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By Sarah Rafique, A-J MEDIA, sarah.rafique@lubbockonline.com



Volunteer Cres Merrell serves food to visitors during the 45th annual Sausage Festival at St. Joseph Hall in Slaton. About 8,000 pounds of sausage were produced for this year's event.

SLATON — Shanda Rodriguez reminisced about her German roots on Sunday during the 45th annual Sausage Festival.

Every year, she looks forward to feasting with her family.

“You can’t get anything like that,” she said of Lubbock. “It’s different.”

The festival began in 1969 with a 200-year-old secret Austrian recipe, which was multiplied to serve 524 pounds of sausage. Now, 45 years later, 8,000 pounds of sausage were produced and sold for the 45th annual event.

Preparation for the event starts months in advance, as church members, parents and friends also made 600 pounds of German potato salad and 150 loaves of homemade bread.

When April Behnke moved to Slaton about eight years ago, she knew right away she would enroll her children in St. Joseph School.

Behnke, a part-time religion and math teacher at the school, said her five children attend the school.

“We have small class sizes. We are able to pray about things, pray with the kids, pray for the kids if they have issues. We’re able to bring God into every situation,” she said. “We are able to teach them critical-thinking skills and concentrate on that instead of just passing a class. ... They

go through a process that will really prepare them for life and not just get them from grade to grade.”

Behnke said the event is the school’s biggest fundraiser of the year. Last year, they raised about \$60,000 during the Sausage Festival and served food to thousands of people.

Behnke, who said she’s not really a “sausage person,” loves the festival and the weeks of preparation leading up to it.

“We actually make it from scratch. The whole community, not just the school. The church also helps and makes it a tradition,” she said. People who have had their kids here, they still help (make the sausage), even if their kids are adults. People will come in and schedule this as their vacation because it’s a really family-oriented thing. Everybody just pitches in wherever they can.”

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