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TOP STORY

## BBQ fundraiser planned at Salvation Army to benefit Kirk fire victims

ROBIN McCLELLAND Globe Gazette

May 17, 2023



Tony Kraft smokes pork butts for Thursday's Kirk Apartment fundraiser. Meals will be served 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. at 747 Village Green Drive in the Salvation Army parking lot.

ROBIN McCLELLAND, Globe Gazette

ROBIN McCLELLAND Globe Gazette

Retired firefighter Tony Kraft has seen both sides of fire tragedies. As a firefighter, he fought to preserve homes and businesses. But in 1999, he left a home he had fought to preserve left with only the clothes on his back.

Now he has plans to give back to everyone involved in the Kirk Apartment fire.

From 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Thursday, Kraft and his crew from We 3 Pig BBQ will be serving pork sandwiches, chips and

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Kraft is welcoming firefighters, police officers and generous community members to stop by for the cookout and some appreciation. "I've been in both situations. The firefighters put so much into it, and for the victims, well ..."

Kraft doesn't talk a lot about the electrical fire that destroyed his Hayfield home and possessions. He doesn't elaborate on the loss or the rebuilding, but emotion is written all over his face.

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"We just want to say thanks and maybe make a little money to help out. If we serve 400 meals, that's about \$2,000, and every bit counts," he says.

The Kirk Apartments burned down April 24. The emergency call came in early that afternoon and by early evening, the fire raged so fiercely downtown was blackened with smoke. Residents huddled in the parking lot and watched helplessly as the fire destroyed their dwellings.

On scene, Tracy Hedegard-Stump, director of social services at the Salvation Army, met with shell-shocked tenants to arrange shelter, food and other immediate necessities. With 44 units affected, Salvation Army assisted victims to find temporary housing with friends and family. For seven residents, there was no one to bunk with, even for a short time.

Funds that Hedegard-Stump says would normally help North Iowans to make security deposits or perhaps pay a month of rent were depleted in the aftermath of the calamity.

So, to replenish those dollars, We 3 Pig BBQ has donated time, food and talent. "It's just about giving back," Kraft says. "It's actually our first time out on our own. I used to work with another guy. I actually got his smoker from him, and now we're ready to give it a shot."

Salvation Army is located at 747 Village Green Drive in Mason City.

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### PHOTOS: Kirk Apartments in Mason City destroyed by huge fire

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Mason City firefighters battle a huge blaze at the Kirk Apartments in downtown Mason City on Monday, April 24, 2023.

MATTHEW REZAB, Globe Gazette

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