

# KARNES

## Countywide

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## 'Cueing up community improvement BBQ Bash awards funds for local organizations

by **Barbara Audet**  
*Editor*

The intersection of the COVID-19 pandemic and a creative competition between two friends, sparked a plan that this week benefitted three area organizations and departments.

On May 25, officials from South Texas BBQ Bash met representatives of the Karnes City Volunteer Fire Department, the Kenedy Volunteer Fire Department and the Karnes County Youth Show at the Karnes City

Courthouse to present each with a check.

Both fire departments received a check for \$7,500 and the Karnes County Youth Show was gifted with a \$15,000 award.

Representing Kenedy Volunteer Fire Department were Maria Reyna, Michael Banda and Chief Juan M. Bryan. Representing Karnes City Volunteer Fire Department were Domingo Alaniz Jr., Chris Bergeron, Morris Brown, Fire Chief Charlie Malik, Jesse Morin, and Monica Quintanilla.



Event coordinators and co-chairmen Collin McElrath (left) and George Bunker were eager to hand out the funds to local organizations. (Photo by Barbara Audet)

Hayden Tucker, EMT-B, and Gregory Smith, EMT-P, also attended.

On hand to accept for the Karnes County Youth Show was President Jim Sartwelle III. Student exhibitors for the youth show come from area home economics classes, 4-H, FCCLA and FFA.

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with expertise in home-making and livestock.

Joining in the award presentation were Karnes County Sheriff Dwayne Villanueva, Chief Deputy Robert Ebrom, Karnes County Pct. 2 Commissioner Benny Lyssy and Karnes County Pct. 1 Commissioner Shelby Dubnik.

The funds were generated by the South Texas BBQ Bash inaugural cook-off competition held April 30, 2022. Overall, the BBQ Bash estimates the value of meals and contributions to the community is approximately \$320,400.

The grand champion was ARC Inspection Services. The reserve champion was United Vision Logistics. People's Choice went to Coastal Chemical Co. LLC, a Brenntag Company. The showmanship award went to Mulholland Energy Services.

Performances at the 2022 event were provided by Cody Hibbard, the Chad Cooke Band, Sundance Head, Hannah Kay and Gabe Garcia.

Event coordinators and co-chairmen George Bunker and Collin McElrath said they hope this is just the beginning of many such presentations in the future as they make plans to continue the event next year. The date is set for April 29, 2023, in Kenedy.

Bunker, who resides in Colorado, said they were especially proud that 5,808 meals were presented at the 2022 bash at no charge to those who attended.

Before there was a South Texas BBQ Bash, West Texas was the site of two other barbecue events, where oilfield service teams brought their

cooking skills to bat in four separate culinary competitions. Brisket, chicken and ribs were served up to the delight of local food fanciers.

According to McElrath, at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, job security for oilfield workers was at risk.

He said the origin of the bash came about by accident.

"There was no traffic. It was like we were waiting for the phone call everyday to lose our jobs," McElrath said. "Everybody was feeling that way. I was at work one day on my computer. We did a lot of cooking and stuff because we didn't have anything else to do. And I had bought some ribs and I was going to cook them on Saturday."

He explained that George Bunker came into the office and he said he had some ribs as well and was set to cook them the next day.

Bunker asked McElrath, "So, you want to have a cook-off?"

"This whole thing started on a one versus one basis. He won, two votes to one. I got one vote and he got two," Bunker added.

But in reality, it may be local communities that are the real winners.

From there they realized there were small



Kenedy Volunteer Fire Department Chief Juan M. Bryan (center) accepts a check from event coordinators and co-chairmen Collin McElrath (left) and George Bunker. (Photos by Barbara Audet)



Karnes City Volunteer Charlie Malik (center) accepts a check from event coordinators and co-chairmen George Bunker.

communities that might benefit from a larger scaled competition. The men began their charitable food, music and charity project in West Texas, but this year, it came to South Texas, instead.

For additional information on how to get involved with the South Texas BBQ Bash, go to southtexasbbqbash.com.

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**Kenedy Volunteer Fire Department Chief Juan M. Bryan (center) accepts a check from event coordinators and co-chairmen Collin McElRath (left) and George Bunker. (Photos by Barbara Audet)**



**Karnes City Volunteer Fire Department Fire Chief Charlie Malik (center) accepts a check from event coordinators and co-chairmen Collin McElRath (left) and George Bunker.**