

MEMBERS ONLY

Elks booth at county fair helps student musicians fundraise

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Brainerd high school band and choir members volunteer at the Elks food booth at the Crow Wing County Fair, Thursday, Aug. 3, 2023.

Hannah Ward / Brainerd Dispatch

By [Hannah Ward](#)

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BRAINERD — The Brainerd Elks food booth at the Crow Wing County Fair, where high school students can volunteer to earn tips for upcoming school-sponsored trips, is approaching its 50th anniversary.

For each tip in the tip jar, they ring a bell and everyone behind the counter shouts out, “Tips for the choir!”

This year, Brainerd high school band and choir members are raising money for the choir’s trip to Ireland next year.



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They switch between fundraising for the band and choir each year, kitchen manager Tim Johnson said.

For the booth to come together, they need around 25 helping hands. With three shifts a day, of four hours each, and six to eight workers per shift, well over 400 hours of work goes into making it operate.

There is also extra work to be done for opening in the morning and closing at night, Johnson said.

It's a win-win for the Brainerd Elks and the high school students, Johnson said, because the booth can't operate without volunteers, and the students get to learn valuable skills, like teamwork and efficiency.

Some students have volunteered at the booth up until they graduate, Johnson said.

Kaylin Schei is part of the choir and volunteered Wednesday and Thursday. She said the work is easier than she expected, and it's fun to work with friends and familiar faces.

As for fundraising for the trip, it will be exciting to visit another country for the first time and see a different culture, Schei said.

Patrons sit at countertop benches and shaded tables for the Elks booth's American cuisine. The bestsellers are their sloppy Joes and loaded baked potatoes, Johnson said.



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The Brainerd Elks are a chapter of a national fraternal organization. Their recurring community service activities include the food booth, community breakfast, fishing to fundraise for their youth activities fund, and a free Thanksgiving dinner.

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