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FEATURED

## Kids meet the fleet, chili brings the heat at Hailey Fire fundraiser

Friedman event full of fun and flavor

By RAIZA GIORGI Express Staff Writer

Oct 4, 2023



Kids had a chance to get up close with heavy equipment during Meet the Fleet on Saturday, Sept. 30.

Express photo by Roland Lane

The annual Meet the Fleet event and the popular 5-Alarm Chili Cook Off came together to make for one fun day at Friedman Memorial Airport this past weekend.

“Combining these two events was a great success, and we had a big turnout from the community, who all seemed to be having a fun time,” said Mike McKenna, executive director for the Valley Chamber. “I loved getting to sample all the delicious chili.”

There were dozens of families that came out to get close-up looks at fire engines, police cars, bulldozers, snowplows and airplanes.

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Kids and adults were climbing in and out of all the vehicles and learning more about what first responders and airport staff do with all the equipment. There were also pilots with smaller planes letting kids get into the cockpits and pretend to fly.

“We love having the kids come and see what we do,” said John Strauss, manager of Glass Cockpit Aviation, which gives flight instructions to aspiring pilots.



Proceeds from Saturday's chili cook off benefited the Hailey Fire Department.

Express/Roland Lane

According to the Pilot Career Center, there is a mass shortage of pilots due to retirements, record air travel demand, and supply and demand. Aspiring pilots are being given signing bonuses and increased salaries by airlines, according to the organization.

“It’s also a great way to see the country and meet people,” Strauss said.

Attendees who participated in the chili contest sampled 14 chilis made by the local fire departments and nonprofits, such as Kiwanis of Hailey, Blaine County Historical Museum and Mens Second Chance Living. There were a variety of chilis from moose chili to very hot and mild options. In addition, the Kiwanis group gave out free hot dogs, chips and drinks to the community.

Funds from the chili contest benefited the Hailey Fire Department.

Chili cook off winners

Best Overall: Men's Second Chance Living

Best Nonprofit: Blaine County Historical Museum

Best First Responder: Christian Ervin

Best Amateur: Braun family

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