

Calgarians eat up Stampede events with a message

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Mother Nature smiled down on Calgarians Saturday when thousands turned out to enjoy many of the city's pancake breakfasts and barbecues. But there were two events in particular that seemed to score big points with the public thanks to some great food and worthy causes.

Kicking off the day with one of the largest constituency Stampede breakfasts in the city was Calgary Mountain View MLA David Swann and his annual breakfast at the Hillhurst Sunnyside Community Centre.

Serving up piping hot pancakes, hashbrowns, meat and vegetarian sausages, as well as coffee and juice, the morning celebration was more than just breakfast, but a way for Swann to raise environment awareness in the community.

In the hopes of reducing the amount of waste generated at the event, Swann encouraged his constituents to do their part for the environment by bringing their own dishes and cutlery.

"Its going to help reduce the waste generated by at least 50 per cent compared to last year," says Swann.

As the shadow minister for environment, sustainable resource development and Aboriginal relations, as well as a physician, Swann says he's seen the impact waste can have on a community, particularly the "health effects and quality of life. I think people are looking for leadership on the environment and in many ways the public is farther ahead than the politicians."

Joining Swann at his fourth annual breakfast was outgoing Alberta Liberal party leader Kevin Taft, who enjoyed his own heaping stack of pancakes on a plate from home.

It was estimated at least 2,000 people attended the event.

A few hours later in another part of town, guests stood in line under the heat of a glaring sun for the taste of summer barbecue when the John Petropoulos Memorial Fund hosted the Free Family Stampede BBQ in the parking lot of London Place West, sponsored by Stix Sports Bar.

Created shortly after the death of Calgary Police Service Const. John Petropoulos, the memorial fund's mission is to "educate the public that workplace safety for emergency service personnel is a shared responsibility and communities can work together to keep risks minimized," says Maryanne Pope, Petropoulos' widow and managing director of JPMF.

Petropoulos was killed on duty when he fell through a false ceiling while investigating a break and enter in a warehouse. He died as the result of a head injury.

During the barbecue the sounds of singer-songwriter McKinley Matters blasted over loud speakers while guests lined up to enjoy favourites like Spolumbo's sausage hot dogs, hamburgers, salad, coleslaw and cowboy boot-shaped cookies.

There was plenty of fun for kids as well with a massive inflatable jump house, dunk tank and face painting.

While the free family barbecue was not a fundraising event for the JPMF, Pope hopes people walk away with an increased awareness about workplace safety and how it can affect everyone. Its latest campaign revolves around traffic safety and the role the public plays in ensuring the safety of emergency services personnel working on the road.

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