

The Northern Light

Blaine and Birch Bay's Community Newspaper

Whatcom County first responders to face off in Battle of the Badges Barbecue



Posted Thursday, July 23, 2026

By Madelyn Jones

Join Whatcom County Fire District 21, which also operates as North Whatcom Fire and Rescue, and the Whatcom County Sheriff's Office for the Battle of the Badges Barbecue on Saturday, July 25, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m in the parking lot of Birch Bay Waterslides, 4874 Birch Bay-Lynden Road.

First responders will be on-site with emergency vehicles and equipment for kids to interact with. There will also be music and raffles, and first responders will face off on the smokers to determine who makes the best ribs. Ribs are in limited supply and will be first-come, first-served, and there will also be hamburgers, hot dogs, chips and drinks available.

Hosting the event is Clean Cut Futures, a Whatcom County nonprofit organization that provides support and free haircuts to veterans, incarcerated people and underprivileged adolescents.

"We developed the nonprofit in order to create a difference right in our struggling part of our community," said Clean Cut Futures President Jerilyn Luna. "We also recognize that if you're going to have a positive impact on the system, you need the entire system to work, right? So we need to

have trust of our community in our first responders in order to have trust in our judicial system, in order to have the confidence to move forward.”

The idea came from Alex “George” Georgulas, a Whatcom County Fire District 21 firefighter and native Texan who barbecues for the station as often as he can throughout the year.

“I think it’s probably illegal to have a get-together in Texas of any size or form or fashion if there’s not barbecue involved,” Georgulas joked. “It really just brings people together; good food, good company.”

Another portion of the event is the scavenger hunt, including stations where participants can crush cans with the Jaws of Life, a hydraulic tool used by first responders to manipulate metal; race to see who can put on firefighting gear the quickest; and run an obstacle course, among other stations.

Those who complete the entire scavenger hunt will earn a coupon for a free snow cone from The C Shop in Birch Bay.

To determine the winners of the friendly barbecue competition, a few randomly selected civilians and the highest-ranking available team member from both sides will be blindfolded and asked to select which ribs they prefer.

The winning team will earn a gold-plated trophy in the shape of a grill, created and donated by retired Blaine Police Department officer Tom Erickson, who also volunteers with Whatcom County Fire District 21.

Erickson does metal-working and welding as a hobby, and in the past has made memorial signs for people in the fire district that have passed away.

Also a large focus of the event is giving those in the community, particularly children, the opportunity to meet and interact with their local first responders.

“It’s really a whole community thing,” Luna said. “You can’t fix a broken system if you’re only working on one piece.”

Dairy Queen is the main sponsor of the event and will provide the hot dogs and hamburgers, as well as ice cream treats while supplies last. Dairy Queen’s mascot, Curly, will also make an appearance.

The event is free and open to the public with no registration required to attend.

“I just thought it would be a great way to get the community all together and involved, and to get kids comfortable being around firefighters, and the public for that matter,” Georgulas said. “We’re all up in their lives, potentially 24-7, so we’re just trying to let them into ours a little bit.”