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Chamber to host 40th Pig Roast Aug. 5

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This year, the 40th Annual Pig Roast and Political Rally will be held Aug. 5 from 6 to 9 p.m. at the Lake Eva Event Center.

It's been 40 years since the first Northeast Polk Chamber of Commerce Pig Roast was held in Haines City.

Back then, it was a social function that also served to raise funds for the organization. It wasn't until several years later that political candidates began attending.

This year, the 40th Annual Pig Roast and Political Rally will be held Aug. 5 from 6 to 9 p.m. at the Lake Eva Event Center.

Forty years ago, it was 1982 and then-Chamber leaders Hedy Weddington and Shirley Quinn organized the first Pig Roast with a cost of \$5 per person. The chamber provided the pig that was roasted the evening of the event and attendees brought a side dish to share.

Paul Senft, Haines City businessman and former politician, was instrumental in bringing the candidates into the Pig Roast picture.

Back then, contests between the candidates were held. Competitions like pig calling and greased pig battles were held at locations like the FFA Training Center and V-8 Ranch.

Over the years, the Pig Roast has grown into one of the Chamber's largest and most successful events of the year. It is so popular that even during COVID, the Chamber held the Roast outdoors at Balmoral.

"This is the perfect opportunity for residents to get their questions answered by city, county, state and federal candidates," said Lana Stripling, president of the Northeast Polk County Chamber of Commerce.

Stripling said that every candidate who is running for any office has been invited to the Pig Roast. This year, that amounts to more than 100.

Candidates are assigned a location at the center to meet and greet attendees before the event begins. Additionally, during the formal portion of the evening, each is introduced to the audience and will have the opportunity to speak briefly.

Those who have registered include Scott Franklin (State Representative for the 15th District running for re-election); Colleen Burton (State Representative for the 40th District running for Florida Senate 22nd District); and Martha Santiago (Polk County Commissioner District 4 running for re-election). Historically, numerous candidates and incumbents sign up for the popular event so Stripling is expecting many more.

To commemorate the 40th anniversary of the event, there will be photos and other memorabilia from previous roasts on display for attendees to enjoy.

Tickets also include a catered dinner by John Michael Exquisite Weddings and Catering, door prizes, and music by band Red Hot Rooster and more.

Tickets are \$50 per person and tables are available. Candidates are required to purchase a Candidate Package for \$175 which includes one dinner ticket and a table space.

For more information or to purchase a ticket, table, or package, call the chamber at 863-422-3751 or email [info @northeastpolkchamber.com](mailto:info@northeastpolkchamber.com).