

Red beans and rice anyone?

By Lisa T. Mathis

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The Memorial Frank Martin Jr. Red Beans and Rice Luncheon was held last Friday, and the annual gathering was a success.

It all started with an abundance of rice and creative thinking.

"In 1992 the Food Bank received a huge supply of rice. We gave it away. We sold it, and we still had a bunch," explained Martin's widow, Sha'nah Martin. "It was tax time. People were paying taxes and were broke."

So the Food Bank decided to put the rice to good use. Having a red beans and rice luncheon would serve many purposes. People low on funds from tax season could receive a cheap meal. It would raise awareness about hunger in America, raise much-needed funds for the Wiregrass Area United Way Food Bank, and garner donations from taxpayers who needed a tax break.

"It was originally centered around tax day, but different day and time availability for occasions has shifted the day around a bit," explained Mrs. Martin.

Food critic Chef Michael Sigler, president of the Wiregrass Chapter of the Association



Heaven's Island, a steel drum band from St. Columba Catholic Church, entertained guests at the Memorial Frank Martin Jr. Red Beans and Rice luncheon last Friday. The annual gathering was a success.

LISA T. MATHIS/Progress

lumba Catholic Church, entertained guests.

The Wiregrass Area United Way Food Bank was founded by Tommy Ricketts and the late Frank Martin Jr. It primarily serves six counties in southeast Alabama: Dale, Coffee, Geneva, Henry, Barbour and How-

in the past 15 years.

Frank Martin Jr. was an original board member and was very instrumental in getting the food bank started. It was founded in July of 1990 and operated under the umbrella of the United Way for the first three years.

or it would go back to them."

So a food bank was created. "My husband said he would do it for six months. His six months turned into years."

Mrs. Martin remembers one day in particular during the building of the warehouse.

October 1995 and the fundraising luncheon was named after him shortly thereafter.

The Wiregrass Area United Way Food Bank has ongoing efforts to feed the hungry. The food bank also offers classes on volunteering and tours of the