



Fueling Educators, Strengthening Communities

First United Bank celebrates 30 years of annual
Teacher Appreciation Cookouts.



Program Summary

For more than 30 years, First United Bank has demonstrated its commitment to community by honoring educators through its annual Teacher Appreciation Cookouts. Established in 1995 by founder Ray M. Bain and inspired by his wife Barbara Bain's career as an educator, the program was created to recognize and support the teachers, coaches, administrators, and school staff who shape future generations and strengthen West Texas communities.

What began as a small expression of gratitude has grown into one of the Bank's longest standing and most impactful community initiatives, serving more than 3,500 educators through 27 cookouts across 23 communities each August. Funded entirely by First United Bank, the program is made possible through the hands-on involvement of Bank employees who coordinate, prepare, cook, serve, and clean up each event while providing practical classroom and workplace gifts valued at more than \$20,000 annually.

By ensuring educators begin each school year feeling appreciated, valued, and supported, the Teacher Appreciation Cookouts strengthen relationships with local school districts, support public education, and invest in the future success of West Texas communities.

Narrative

The goal of First United Bank's Teacher Appreciation Cookouts is to recognize and support the educators, administrators, coaches, maintenance personnel, and school staff members who dedicate their lives to serving students and shaping the future of West Texas communities.

The program was founded on a simple but powerful belief: strong schools create strong communities. As a community bank, First United Bank understands that its success is directly connected to the success of the communities it serves. By honoring educators before the start of each school year, the Bank seeks to foster encouragement, strengthen relationships, and demonstrate genuine appreciation for those who invest daily in future generations.

The initiative also fulfills First United Bank's Founding Principle of Community by creating meaningful opportunities for employees to serve and engage with the schools, families, and communities that support the Bank.



Program History and Growth

First United Bank began hosting Teacher Appreciation Cookouts in 1995 under the leadership of founder Ray M. Bain. Recognizing the importance of education and inspired by his wife Barbara Bain's lifelong dedication as an educator, the Bain family established the tradition as a way to thank teachers for their commitment and service.

The program initially served a small number of communities, including Dimmitt, Earth, Seagraves, and Lubbock, Texas. Over the last three decades, the initiative has expanded significantly. In 2019, First United Bank hosted 15 cookouts. By 2025, the program had grown to 27 cookouts conducted over a two-to-three-week period before the start of the school year.

The growth accelerated following the acquisition of nine rural banking centers, seven of which joined the First United Bank family in 2025. Within months of becoming First United communities, local school districts were incorporated into the Teacher Appreciation Cookout program, extending the Bank's culture of service to even more educators and students.

Today, the program serves 23 communities throughout West Texas, reaching more than 3,500 educators and school staff members annually.

Steps in the Process

The Teacher Appreciation Cookouts require months of planning and coordination.

Planning and Coordination

- Community Relations staff begin preparations during the summer months.
- Bank employees coordinate directly with local school districts to schedule cookouts during teacher in-service and back-to-school training periods.
- Detailed planning documents track dates, locations, volunteer assignments, attendance counts, food quantities, gift distribution, and logistical needs.

Volunteer Engagement

- Approximately 50+ First United Bank employees participate annually through rotating volunteer cook teams.
- Employees travel throughout West Texas to support events in multiple communities.
- Volunteer responsibilities include purchasing supplies, transporting equipment, cooking meals, serving attendees, distributing gifts, engaging with educators, and cleaning event sites.

Steps in the Process - Continued

Event Execution

- During a two-to-three-week period each August, teams travel from community to community conducting cookouts.
- More than 3,500 meals are prepared and served.
- Each attendee receives a practical gift selected based on educator feedback and classroom needs.

Follow-Up and Relationship Building

- Bank employees maintain ongoing relationships with schools throughout the year.
- Feedback from educators and administrators helps guide future planning and gift selections.



Program Management

The Teacher Appreciation Cookouts are entirely created, funded, managed, and executed by First United Bank.

The Bank provides:

- 100% of food costs
- 100% of supply costs
- 100% of volunteer labor
- 100% of teacher gifts
- Event planning and coordination
- Transportation and logistics

No costs are passed on to participating schools or districts.

A Community Relations Coordinator oversees the program while local Banking Center employees coordinate directly with school administrators and volunteer teams to ensure successful execution in every community.



Program Results and Impact

The Teacher Appreciation Cookouts deliver measurable impact throughout West Texas each year:

- 30 years of continuous event service since 1995
- 27 teacher appreciation cookouts annually (and growing)
- 23 communities served
- More than 3,500 educators and staff recognized annually
- More than 3,500 meals served annually
- Approximately 150–200 volunteer hours contributed annually
- Approximately 50 employee volunteers involved annually
- More than \$20,000 invested annually in educator gifts
- More than \$35,000 invested annually in food, supplies, equipment and travel
- 80% growth in cookout events since 2019 (15 events to 27 events)



Community Impact

The impact extends far beyond a meal.

In many rural communities, educators and First United Bank employees know one another personally. The cookouts create opportunities to strengthen relationships, demonstrate gratitude, and reinforce the Bank's commitment to the communities it serves.

School districts eagerly anticipate the annual tradition, often preparing attendance counts and schedules before Bank representatives begin coordinating event dates. The continued growth of the program and overwhelming positive feedback from educators demonstrate the value and significance of the initiative.

Teachers consistently express appreciation for the practical gifts, personal interaction, and recognition they receive. Administrators view the program as an important community partnership that helps foster a positive start to the school year.

Most importantly, the initiative communicates a simple but meaningful message: **educators matter.**

Why the Program Matters

At First United Bank, community is more than a value, it is a founding principle.

The Teacher Appreciation Cookouts represent a long-term investment in the people who help shape future generations. Educators influence future business leaders, community leaders, skilled workers, and engaged citizens. By supporting those educators, First United Bank helps strengthen the foundation of the communities it serves.

For more than three decades, this initiative has demonstrated that meaningful community impact is created through consistent service, authentic relationships, and a genuine commitment to making a difference.

The Teacher Appreciation Cookouts remain one of First United Bank's most enduring examples of community leadership and its unwavering dedication to serving West Texas communities.





