

NEWS

Elks fundraiser gets \$11,000 for cemetery restoration

The Wadena Elks Lodge hosted a tornado benefit featuring Buddy and the Versatiles on Saturday, Sept. 11. The benefit raised about \$11,000 for the Wadena Cemetery and Calvary Cemetery.



Photo by Rachelle Klemme The Elks benefit supper and concert packed the dining hall and raised funds for cemetery restoration.

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The Wadena Elks Lodge hosted a tornado benefit featuring Buddy and the Versatiles on Saturday, Sept. 11. The benefit raised about \$11,000 for the Wadena Cemetery and Calvary Cemetery.

Dinner with a silent auction was held, followed by the band performing after 8 p.m. According to Steve Richter of the Elks, about 525 people

were served the hog roast dinner. The hog and the 20 hours to cook it were donated by TC Backyard Barbecue.

Buddy and the Versatiles were most active from 1958 to 1968, but they occasionally reunite. In April, they had also played at the Wadena Elks Lodge for the Jan Heltemes benefit. Band members are Buddy Olson of Crosby, Minn., Elroy Kern of Verndale, Dave Budig of Yankton, S.D., Dick Kupfer of Yankton, S.D. and Bill Hansen of Mounds View, Minn.

Some of the audience members got up and danced to the familiar rock 'n' roll tunes.

Dennis Olson, president of the Wadena Cemetery Association, and Michael Pete of the cemetery board, said the money would go toward uninsured damages like tree removal, stumps and resetting stones.

He said that while headstones are the personal property of the families, contacting them would take years.

"The project just has to be done. It can't be put off," Olson said. "It's a sensitive issue."

The Rev. Don Wagner of St. Ann's Catholic Church, representing Calvary Cemetery, said that donations would go to monuments and any storm-related damages to help defray the cost.

"This is a wonderful benefit," Wagner said.

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