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CMU rec students raising funds for Red Cross after classmate's house fire

MOUNT PLEASANT — Some Central Michigan University recreation students are turning a tragedy into a lesson — actually, a final exam — in caring.

On the evening of March 26, the family home of Greenville junior Matt Collins was destroyed by a fire.



Courtesy photo by Matt Collins

Word of the fire quickly spread among Collins' friends and classmates in Lori Stoudt's Recreation, Parks and Leisure Services Administration 430: Recreation Programming class, who approached their professor with a suggestion: Make their final exam for the course a hands-on experience of planning and executing a fundraiser for the family. At Collins' suggestion, the late-April event will instead benefit the American Red Cross, which assisted his family after the fire.

"I was shocked and amazed that my class would want to take time out of their busy schedules to help out my family, particularly when many of them hardly know me, let alone my family," said Collins, who also is a broadcast and cinematic arts student and manager of CMU's WMHW-FM 91.5 radio station. "To see CMU, the RPL department and the community supporting us says a lot about Mount Pleasant, this university and CMU's commitment to its students."

The fundraiser, "Pig Out in the Park," will take place from 2 to 6 p.m. April 24 at Island Park near downtown Mount Pleasant. The city has donated the use of the park for the afternoon, said Stoudt.

The rain-or-shine event will feature a pig roast and side dishes by Larrabee's Family Restaurant of Mount Pleasant, a rubber duck race in the Chippewa River, raffles, and a variety of field games. The event is free and open to the public, but donations are welcome. Meal tickets cost \$5 each at the door while food supplies last.

"After having successfully completed our class programs and being able to raise money for other non-profit organizations, our class felt confident about hosting another similar program for charity," said RPL 430 student Kathleen Laignel, a senior from Harbor Beach. "When we heard about Matt's situation at home, all of us wanted to do something to help. To me, helping a person in need is one of the most devout and sincere deeds one can do."

Larrabee's, the City of Mount Pleasant and Total-Lee Sports are offering sponsorship support for the event. Several anonymous individual donors also have provided funding.