

Happy Holidays! Serendipity smiles on Alfred University, Brockport turkey farm

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ALFRED, NY – Like many institutions of higher education and small businesses, Alfred University and Ridgecrest Turkey Farm in Brockport, NY, have experienced their share of challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Two annual events popular with Alfred University staff and faculty—the Opening Breakfast and Holiday Luncheon—have been canceled this year due to the University’s efforts to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. At Ridgecrest Turkey Farm, sales have dipped significantly this year due to the pandemic. As a result, owner Travis Mattison found himself with close to 200 unsold birds, less than two weeks before Thanksgiving.

As luck would have it, with the holiday season fast approaching, Alfred University and Mattison found a way to help each other. The Alfred University’s Board of Trustees has agreed to underwrite the cost of purchasing most of Mattison’s turkeys, which will be given to University employees next week, before Thanksgiving Day. Mattison has agreed to sell the turkeys to the University at a discounted rate.

So how did this mutually beneficial arrangement come about? By chance and good fortune, actually.

Giovina Lloyd, Alfred’s vice president of Business and Finance suggested Sunday that in lieu of the Holiday Luncheon, Alfred University could purchase turkeys and hams for its employees. Coincidentally, on his drive from Rochester to Alfred Sunday, Alfred University President Mark Zupan took in a podcast aired by WXXI, Rochester’s National Public Radio affiliate, in which Mattison talked about how COVID-19 had hurt his business. Zupan presented Lloyd’s suggestion to members of the Board of Trustees, noting Mattison’s predicament, and trustees agreed to purchase the turkeys.

Because there will not be enough birds for all Alfred University’s 550-plus employees, Trustees have also agreed to purchase additional turkeys, along with hams and vegan dishes, for those who do not get a fresh turkey. Zupan said the Board is particularly appreciative of the efforts of faculty and staff to keep the campus open for in-person classes throughout the Fall semester. The gift, he said, “is a token of the Board’s gratitude for all that employees have done this fall for our University and our students.”

It is common for businesses in the area to purchase turkeys for their employees, Mattison said, “but it’s usually 20 or 30 turkeys...never this much.” He noted that sales have picked back up in the last few days and—thanks in large part to Alfred University’s purchase—he is nearly sold out.

Mattison was quick to point out that money was never his primary concern.

“I was more worried about food waste,” Mattison said, explaining that unsold birds would likely have made their way to a rendering facility and processed into pet food. “That won’t happen, fortunately.”

To show his appreciation to Mattison, Zupan said he plans to present him with a gift certificate to Wegman’s grocery store, so the Mattison family can enjoy a prime rib dinner on Thanksgiving. Mattison noted on the NPR program that turkey is not his preferred holiday meal.