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- Special to the Leader & Times

“Congratulations! Your contest has been approved and has been added to the schedule for KCBS sanctioned events.”

These were the greetings Jim Rice received Wednesday from the Kansas City BBQ Society. Rice has been the organizer of the United Wireless/Five State Fair event since it began two years ago.

“The contest is held in conjunction with the county fair and is a major event” Rice said.

Since the original motion to hold a KCBS contest, following the first year’s contest, several changes have been made.

“The first year, it was very difficult to obtain teams and find judges for the contest,” according to Rice.

Since the original contest, the fair board has approved joining the Rocky Mountain Barbeque Association, RMBBQA. Along with the membership came a program known as JLP or Judge Liaison Program and a Cup Event contest open to members of RMBBQA. These two programs have been a great addition to the contest, according to Rice.

Prospective judges now sign up online around the first of the year for events they want to judge during the year. One thing Rice has learned is “you better sign up early if you want to judge a RMBBQA contest.”

The local contest judge signup is all handled thru RMBBQA and the program has been a great help in obtaining 100 percent Certified BBQ Judges, or CBJs as they are better known.

Rice said. “Having 100 percent CBJ is important as the CBJs have completed a training class in what to look for and what to expect when the box arrives at their table. Also cook teams prefer a high number of certified judges as well.

A CBJ class was conducted earlier this spring at Seward County Community College. Other classes are being considered by KCBS reps at this time.

For those interested in joining a class, send an e-mail to: kCBS@swko.net.

United Wireless has agreed to be the Premier Sponsor again this year.

“They have been just great to work with and helped in about every way possible,” Rice said. “In addition to their original offer to sponsor the contest, this past year, they allowed the use of their generator for additional power for the expanding number of contestants. The savings from generator rental allowed the prize money to exceed \$7,000 which is really good for a young

contest like ours.

“We so much appreciate the support of United Wireless and the Seward County Fair Board,” he added.

The first year, 15 teams entered. This year, 25 entered, and that number is expected to grow even higher as the contest has two years of excellent ratings from KCBS Reps on the contest critique.

Also, RMBBQA said in an e-mail, the evaluation by judges and cook teams “was above average,” according to Rice.

More improvements are coming. This year, organizers are working on a Peoples Choice event, which will allow the public to sample the berbecue.

Also a Kids Q is being considered.

Participants came from Neb., Kan., Colo., Okla., Texas and New Mexico.

“That is in keeping with the Five State Fair name,” Rice said. “We didn’t plan it, it just happened.”

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