



## **Firefighters Creating Memories Program Fresno City Firefighters Providing Fun-Filled Memories to Children with Disabilities, Illness and Emotional Trauma**

Now in its 30<sup>th</sup> year of operation, the Firefighters Creating Memories program will once again give children who might otherwise be unable to attend the Fair the chance to experience the great traditions and fun! This special program is made available to children who suffer from terminal or debilitating illnesses, physical limitations, mental disabilities, or serious emotional trauma. The Firefighters Creating Memories Program, in partnership with the Fresno Fire Department, The Big Fresno Fair and Butler Amusements provides the opportunity for these children to enjoy the Fair like a VIP for an entire day.

To celebrate and commemorate this three decade milestone, The Big Fresno Fair and Fresno City Fire Department are conducting a press conference on Thursday, October 5 at 4:00 p.m. in the Table Mountain Rancheria Park. Media is encouraged to attend and there will be a family to tour the Fairgrounds with.

“Firefighter’s Creating Memories” is a public/private community outreach program that partners local firefighters with families that have mentally or physically challenged children. This unique program has successfully been developed at a local level and utilizes the medical experience and community recognition of local firefighters.

This special program takes place Monday through Thursday from 5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. and Friday through Sunday from Noon to 4:00 p.m. The firefighters escort the families on each of The Big Fresno Fair’s 12-day event, which allows the children the opportunity to experience rides and areas of the Fair that would normally be inaccessible. Children are aided in riding rides, playing games, and experiencing the Fair to its fullest. The Big Fresno Fair’s carnival provider, Butler Amusements, allows these children and their escorts to ride on as many rides as they want and even sends them on their way afterwards with a coveted stuffed animal.

The program was developed in 1994 by retired Fire Captain Bob Waterston and Fire Battalion Chief Chuck Tobias. In the incipient years, two firefighters escorted a single family with one child that was medically challenged. The program has expanded each subsequent year and presently joins two large families (many of the families have more than one challenged child), with six to ten firefighters each day. During the program’s tenure, it has served over 2,000 family members and created priceless memories for them to treasure.

“The benefits of the Firefighters Creating Memories Program have far exceeded our original goals,” said Tobias. “Our primary goal is to create lifelong memories for these children and their families by allowing them to experience the Fair fun like a VIP. We are also making it possible for these children to forget about their disabilities or medical conditions for a day and just be a kid!”



The additional benefits that have been recognized are the ability of the parents to spend quality time with other siblings while the firefighters are focused on assisting the challenged child. The firefighters have experienced an increase in morale and compassion caused by the positive environment.

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The Fresno City Fire Department has recognized that emergency response is only one component of quality public service. The ability to create partnerships with private enterprise and embrace the holistic approach to community service should remain as one of our highest priorities.

The relationships with the private sector community leaders have generated additional opportunities to partner in multiple community outreach programs which have benefited the Muscular Dystrophy Association, Make-A-Wish Foundation, Central Valley Burn Foundation, Valley Children’s Hospital, Exceptional Parent’s Unlimited, and Burn Aware. All funding is provided by local businesses, the Fresno Fire Chiefs Foundation and The Big Fresno Fair.

The Fire Department invites you to join us as we celebrate this momentous occasion. If you have additional questions, please contact: Chuck Tobias 824-0950