33rd Annual Firefighters Creating Memories Program

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

Firefighters Creating Memories is a community outreach program that pairs local firefighters with families that have children with mental or physical challenges. Since 1994, this unique program has been successfully developed at a local level and utilizes the medical experience and community recognition of local firefighters. Firefighters help children access rides that might otherwise be infeasible, and do everything in their power to ensure the child and their family have a safe, fun and memorable day at The Big Fresno Fair.

Through a partnership between the **Fresno Fire Department**, **The Big Fresno Fair** and **Butler Amusements**, children are given the chance to enjoy the fair like a VIP for an entire day. The 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. during the Fair.

Firefighters escort the families on each day of The Big Fresno Fair's 12-day event, which allows kids 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 retired Fire Battalion Chief Chuck Tobias. In the early years, two firefighters escorted a single family with a child who was medically challenged. The program has since expanded each subsequent year and sometimes hosts 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.

We encourage media to cover this amazing program; however, collaboration in advance is imperative as some families do not wish to be filmed.

If you are interested in covering the Firefighters Creating Memories Program at The Big Frenso Fair, please contact Rene Gonzales (renegonzales@fresno.gov) and Danielle Griffin (danielle@cohencommunications.com) to make arrangements in advance.