



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **THE BIG FRESNO FAIR RECORDS ITS FIFTH MERRILL AWARD – THE TOP HONOR IN THE FAIR INDUSTRY - FOR ITS JOINT HEALTH & SAFETY PUBLIC OUTREACH PROGRAM WITH THE FRESNO COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH**

*The Big Fresno Fair also took home an incredible 18 Annual Achievement Awards at the Western Fairs Association's Annual Conference in Reno, Nevada*

**FRESNO, CALIFORNIA, March 8, 2022...**The smiles on The Big Fresno Fair's Management team's faces could not be any bigger as they accepted the Fair's record-breaking fifth Merrill Award – the "Academy Award or the Oscar" of the fair industry; the highest honor given – at the Western Fairs Association's (WFA) 99th Convention & Trade Show in Reno, Nevada where fair CEOs, directors, staff, delegates and fair-related professionals from roughly 125 fairs throughout the Western United States attended to celebrate the greatest accomplishments of 2021. Given for the Fair's *Joint Health & Safety Public Outreach Program* in partnership with the Fresno County Department of Public Health (FCDPH), the Merrill Award recognizes fair programs that demonstrate outstanding vision, leadership and excellence.

"We are both equally proud and grateful for the collaborative spirit of our Fresno County Department of Public Health and how they approached working with us to bring The Big Fresno Fair back to an in-person event in 2021," said Lauri King, Deputy Manager II, The Big Fresno Fair. "We proudly share this Merrill Award with them, and everyone who played a part in this outreach program, as well as the onsite execution of our operational plans – it is because of everyone we had a successful and safe Fair."

After a modified drive-thru Fair in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, The Big Fresno Fair was able to not only return for an in-person event, but do so safely – even utilizing its platform to help communicate important health and safety messages in collaboration with the Fresno County Department of Public Health (FCDPH). Components of this program included the "Be Smart. Play Safe. Stay Healthy" Media PSA Campaign with the FCDPH, ABC 30 and Univision Fresno – sharing with the community how to enjoy public events safely. Then, of course, operational plans, which were reviewed on a monthly, then bi-weekly basis leading up to the 2021 Big Fresno Fair. Those operational plans were unveiled to the public and media at a health and safety press briefing that included the health department, along with some of the Fair's safety partners – Fresno Police Department, Fresno Fire Department, American Ambulance and Fresno County Private Security. The press briefing included a panel discussion addressing not only our COVID-19 safety measures, but other ways we work to put on the safest event for our community such as security, inspections, veterinary care for our livestock animals and race horses. Lastly, the Fair shared important COVID-19 information and guidelines for the Fair throughout the grounds for the public. All of these elements working together resulted in a successful and, most importantly, safe 2021 Big Fresno Fair – with an attendance of 591,921 during the in-person 12-day event.





“This award is a well-deserved recognition of The Big Fresno Fair team’s extraordinary efforts to organize safe, wholesome celebrations of life in Fresno County, and to continue the traditions that connect so many families and neighbors over generations,” said Dr. Vohra, Interim Health Officer. “The Big Fresno Fair has been a solid partner with our health department in testing, vaccinations, and public safety during a number of different events and activities, and we look forward to continued collaboration with this amazing team.”

The previously awarded Big Fresno Fair Merrill Awards were given for: (2007) Pirates in the Park attraction in the Table Mountain Rancheria Park, which was part of a multi-year capital improvements project; (2011) for the “Feed the Need” Community Food Drive held in collaboration with The Salvation Army and Community Food Bank; (2013) for The Big Fresno Fair Museum and documentary-style video, *Heritage Talks*; and (2015) for the Fresno County Historical Museum.

In addition to receiving the coveted Merrill Award this year, The Big Fresno Fair walked away with 18 WFA Achievement Awards, which recognize the best practices by fairs in a variety of categories from advertising to community involvement. Below is a complete list of WFA Achievement Awards received:

#### First Place Awards:

- Community Outreach – Joint Health & Safety Public Outreach Campaign with the Fresno County Department of Public Health
- Overall Fair Marketing Campaign – The Big Fresno Fair’s Food, Family & Fun!
- New Fair-time Event, Exhibit or Program – Livin’ Local Marketplace
- Drive-Through Food & Entertainment – Big Fresno Fair’s Fantasy of Lights
- Single Radio Ad – Image Savings Spot
- Radio Ad Series – Image Savings and Last Chance Spots
- Single Foreign Language Radio Ad – Image Savings Spot, Spanish
- Single TV Ad – Image Savings Spot
- Television Ad Series – Pre-Fair Savings and Image Savings Spots
- Television Ad Foreign Language – Spanish Pre-Fair Savings Spot
- Give It Your Best Shot – Carnival
- (2) Give It Your Best Shot – Animals
- Give It Your Best Shot – Entertainment

#### Second-Place Awards:

- Give It Your Best Shot – People at the Fair
- Give It Your Best Shot – Entertainment
- Fair-time Advertising Poster – 2021 Big Fresno Fair Entertainment Poster

#### Third-Place Awards:

- Give It Your Best Shot – Carnival

“We are so proud of the Big Fresno Fair for earning their 5<sup>th</sup> Western Fairs Association Merrill Award, lending the Big Fresno Fair to be one of the top awarded fairs in the western United States,” said Sarah Cummings, President & CEO of Western Fairs Association (WFA). “We look forward to their entries each year as they demonstrate their team’s ability to think out of the box, putting forth visionary ideas that work. We are exceptionally impressed with this year’s Merrill Award submission, which helps model for other fairs in our network how to work with their local health departments to have a healthy and safe annual fair or festival. Truly exemplary work.”





The Big Fresno Fair competed against other top fairs of its size such as California State Fair, Orange County Fair, San Diego County Fair, Washington State Fair, Arizona State Fair and Calgary Stampede. WFA, a non-profit trade association that serves the fair industry in the western United States and Canada, offers the annual Achievement Awards to recognize excellence in the fair industry and share successful ideas and programs with other fairs.

#### **About The Big Fresno Fair:**

The Big Fresno Fair, founded in 1884, is the fourth largest fair in the state of California and represents the 21st District Agricultural Association. More than 600,000 people from throughout the State visit The Big Fresno Fair each year making it the largest event in the Central Valley. Members of the Board of Directors include: Chuck Riojas, President; Terry Gonsalves, Vice President; Gary Chahil, Secretary/Treasurer; Linda Mae Balakian Hunsucker; Frank Flores; Jerry Pacheco; Annalisa Perea; Larry Serpa; and Lawrence Salinas. Deputy Managers, Stacy Rianda and Lauri King oversee the daily operations of the Fair. The 2022 Big Fresno Fair will run October 5-16. For more information about The Big Fresno Fair, please visit [www.FresnoFair.com](http://www.FresnoFair.com).

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#### **Resources:**

- <https://spaces.hightail.com/space/3oeX7tza13>
- Merrill Award Photos from WFA Conference.
- Merrill Award Digital Graphics
- Videos and photos from March 8, 2022 presentation at the Fresno County Board of Supervisors honoring the Fresno County Department of Public Health for their role in the program and presentation of their own Merrill Award.

