



Friends of the Big Fresno Fair Preserving and Continuing to Improve the Fairgrounds for Future Generations

For over a century, The Big Fresno Fair has been an important part of the Central Valley community – providing longstanding traditions for families and creating lasting memories. In its 136-year history, The Big Fresno Fair has continued to evolve and improve, providing new and exciting things for Fairgoers to enjoy while holding true to the foundation of its existence – showcasing its rich agricultural heritage and the talents of Fresno County residents.

Friends of the Big Fresno Fair – the Fair’s non-profit 501 (c) 3 Foundation, has been working behind the scenes for more than a decade to raise millions of dollars to build permanent structures like the free family park area complete with nine free attractions for families to enjoy including an award-winning life-sized pirate ship, Fort Fresno and Catfish Falls. They have also helped transform the live racing facility into one of the best tracks on the racing circuit with a remodeled paddock, as well as the addition of the VIP Suite and Luxury Deck.

Additionally, Friends of the Big Fresno Fair was instrumental in funding other improvement projects throughout the grounds such as the addition of the Pavilion Area and construction of the Butler, Chance and Kings Canyon entrance gates.

The newest project it supported, and the largest capital improvement on the Fresno Fairgrounds in more than a decade, is the Fresno County Historical Museum, a \$3.2 million, 14,000 sq. ft. two-story building that showcases the broad history of Fresno County for all to enjoy and learn from. As the Fair looks to be a reflection of its community, the Fresno County Historical Museum features the rich history of the county including everything from public safety and military to agricultural and sports history, plus much more. The Fresno County Historical Museum first opened to the public on Opening Day of the 2015 Big Fresno Fair and continues to draw big crowds, all wanting to step back in time and learn about the incredible history of Fresno County.

The Friends of the Big Fresno Fair has also been instrumental in forming a partnership with the Fresno Historical Society, which resulted in the famed Fresno Courthouse Cupola now on display at The Big Fresno Fair on the south side of the Paul Paul Theater. With support from the community, the Friends of the Big Fresno Fair raised over \$175,000 to completely restore the Cupola and put it on display for the public for the first time in nearly 30 years. Additionally, through a generous donation by the Caglia Family with financial support by the Friends of the Big Fresno Fair, the historic 1947 Mars Drive-in sign is also on display on the east side of the Paul Paul Theater. Other iconic signs acquired and debuted in 2016 include the old Hacienda Motel sign, Hallowell Chevrolet sign and the beloved Lesterburger sign. At the 2017 Big Fresno Fair, three more iconic signs that were a part of Fresno County’s rich history: the Louie Kee Market sign, Eddie’s Speed Shop sign and The Fresno Motel sign.

Making its debut at the 2018 Big Fresno Fair, located just south of the Paul Paul Theater between the award-winning Fresno County Historical Museum and the award-winning Table Mountain Rancheria Park is the newly added “Tractor Tree” built with 22 tractors of varying sizes designed to tell the story of the incredible impact tractors had on the evolution of agriculture in the San Joaquin Valley. There



will be educational storyboards on the history of tractors, as well as an educational video playing in tractor cabs that kids (and adults!) can sit in, take pictures and get a feel of how it is to drive one of these machines.

Not only does the Friends of the Big Fresno Fair support these capital improvement projects, it also heavily supports the education programs at the Fair such as the 27th annual Fair Education Program for Fresno County elementary students and the 9th annual 4.0 & Above Program that recognizes Fresno County 8-12 grade students for their scholastic achievements through scholarships, prizes and, of course, giving away a new car! The Friends of the Big Fresno Fair also sponsor awards every year for the Big Band Review, where Junior High and High School Marching Bands throughout California will compete for cash prizes and trophies.

The work of the Friends of the Big Fresno Fair is ongoing – continually finding ways to help preserve and continue to improve the Fairgrounds for future generations to enjoy, while also supporting the Fair’s various educational programs. Friends of the Big Fresno Fair operates with a 11-person Board and boasts 60 members. There are many exciting new projects on the horizon for the Friends of the Big Fresno Fair that are currently in search of support.

Interviews Available: John C. Alkire, CEO; Stacy Rianda, Deputy Manager II; Lauri King, Deputy Manager II, Big Fresno Fair; Brian I. Tatarian, President of the Friends of the Fair Board of Directors.