



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **THE 2009 BIG FRESNO FAIR ENDS ON A HIGH MARK**

**Fresno, CA...October 20, 2009...** The Big Fresno Fair is pleased to announce the successful completion of the 2009 Big Fresno Fair, which ran October 7<sup>th</sup> through October 18<sup>th</sup>. Fairgoers from throughout the Central Valley, and beyond, enjoyed some of the Fair's newest attractions and capital improvements including: The Water Tree, solar powered by PG&E; "Ag Magic Show" in Crystal Ag Ventureland; World Championship Mutton Bustin'; RV Parking Lot; Landscaped Seating Area; and the "Cow Palace" Milking Barn.

In light of the nation's turbulent economic state, The Big Fresno Fair was focused on providing the largest amount of discounts possible throughout the Fair's run. One of the most popular discount days during the Fair was the Drought Relief Food Drive (10/15), where patrons brought three cans per person between 11:30 a.m. and 5 p.m. and received free admission. More than 56,700 pounds of food (or 28.3 tons) were collected in this unprecedented collaboration that included Community Food Bank, The Salvation Army, The Big Fresno Fair, Central Valley Community Bank, Panera Bread Stores, and local television and radio media. The food donated at The Big Fresno Fair represents the largest single-day collection in local history, which is compared to an earlier food drive in August with the same partners that collected 11,165 pounds of food and \$15,752. Other great discounts included the Unlimited Carnival Ride Wristbands, Group Packs, Seniors' Day (10/7), Kids' Day (10/8), Bud Light Adult Discount Day (10/12), Special Interest Day (10/12), Save Mart and FoodMaxx's \$2 Tuesday (10/13) and \$3 Wednesday (10/13).

Traditional fun Fair attractions were back again this year including: the best of the County's agriculture, livestock and competitive exhibits; 10 days of horseracing; free family-fun adventures

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in Table Mountain Rancheria Park; carnival rides; free shows on the Pavilion, Stella Artois Blues & Brews, Budweiser Cantina and Save Mart Wine Garden stages and various grounds entertainment; plus time-honored Fair food and more. The Table Mountain Concert Series line-up in the Paul Paul Theater was as exciting and demographically diverse as ever before with top sellers Dwight Yoakam, Beach Boys, Stone Temple Pilots and MC Hammer.

The Big Fresno Fair was also named the Western Fairs Association's (WFA) 2009 Feature Fair and welcomed representatives from fairs and festivals throughout the Western United States, Canada and Mexico for a special tour of the Fresno Fairgrounds on October 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>. This was the first time that a California fair had been selected as the Feature Fair. More than 85 people attended this special tour of The Big Fresno Fair, the largest Feature Fair Tour to date according to Stephen Chambers, Executive Director of WFA. As the 2009 Feature Fair, it gave Fresno an opportunity to showcase, first-hand, its innovative programs and vision to its peers within the industry. This designation is not only something for The Big Fresno Fair to be proud of, but for the entire community to be proud of as well.

The 2009 Big Fresno Fair unaudited attendance totaled 514,030 an increase of 2.68% from 2008 when conducting a 12 day comparison. Concession numbers were short by 3% from 2008, which was a direct reflection of the rain out on Tuesday, October 13<sup>th</sup>.

"Our Fair is a reflection of our community and the connection that this Fair has with its community is definitely apparent as the community turned out in numbers. We work hard each day to prepare the Fairgrounds for their annual visit and to ensure the highest level of customer service to keep them coming back," said John Alkire, CEO of The Big Fresno Fair. "I am ecstatic about our numbers in light of the economy. We definitely weathered the unstable economic times, plus overcame the rain, and despite it all, The Big Fresno Fair pushed forward and had a successful Fair."

The Big Fresno Fair also had a phenomenal year in horse racing. The 10-day horse racing event drew large crowds, which showed in the Fair's on-track handle, which was up by 17%. Out of

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State wagering was up 116%, Northern California and Out of State was up 169% and All Sources Live was up 48% percent. The drastic spike in numbers can be attributed to Fresno's full race cards as well as the fact that the Fair's race meet was entirely unoverlapped for the first time in its 126-year history.

"The Big Fresno Fair being unoverlapped is a big deal to our Fair. We no longer have to compete with other tracks in the North for the satellite wagering dollars; our signal is sent all over the country and people are wagering on Fresno," said Alkire. "Also, our residents wait all year to come out and wager on the live horse racing and that shows in the increase in our on-track handle. Overall, it was a big year for the Fair and an even bigger year for horse racing!"

The Jr. Livestock Auction faired well with 558 animals sold between the two auctions on both Saturday's of the Fair. Final numbers are still being totaled, but overall the Jr. Livestock Auction was a big success despite the economy. 4H and FFA members worked hard to reach out to the community and secure buyers before the show.

The overall success of the Fair can be attributed to the community who loves and supports their Fair. Many families stayed local for their entertainment and The Big Fresno Fair provided a family-friendly and affordable option.

Planning is already underway for the 2010 Big Fresno Fair, which will includes the addition of the bridge to The Water Tree, more trees and other enhancements to existing infrastructure throughout the Fairgrounds. The 2009 Big Fresno Fair will run October 6<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> and will mark the 127<sup>th</sup> year of this valued tradition.

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