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THE BIG FRESNO FAIR RECORDS ITS THIRD MERRILL AWARD AND ANOTHER 19 AWARDS FROM THE WESTERN FAIRS ASSOCIATION'S ANNUAL CONFERENCE

FRESNO, CALIFORNIA, January 22, 2015...The smiles on The Big Fresno Fair's Management Team's faces could not be any bigger as they accepted the Fair's third Merrill Award – the “Oscar” of the fair industry; the highest honor given – at the Western Fairs Association's (WFA) 92nd Convention & Trade Show in Reno, Nevada where more than 1,200 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 2014. Given for the development of The Big Fresno Fair Museum and new, documentary-style video, *Heritage Talks*, the Merrill Award recognizes fair programs that demonstrate outstanding vision, leadership and excellence.

The Big Fresno Fair has received all three Merrill Awards under the current leadership team of John C. Alkire, CEO; Stacy Rianda, Deputy Manager II; and Lauri King, Deputy Manager I. The Big Fresno Fair received its first award in 2007 for the Pirates in the Park attraction in the Table Mountain Rancheria Park, which was part of a multi-year capital improvements project for the Fairgrounds and its second Merrill Award in 2012 for the “Feed the Need” Community Food Drive held in collaboration with The Salvation Army and Community Food Bank.

“It is such an incredible honor to win the Merrill Award for our Museum, which is truly a project for the community that continues to evolve and grow,” said John C. Alkire, CEO of The Big Fresno Fair. “The Fair has been entrenched in the lives of Valley residents for 131 years, and that is why we knew it was imperative to preserve the rich history, those personal stories and memories for future generations to see and learn about.”

First unveiled in 2013, The Big Fresno Fair Museum showcases over 2,600 items from varying points in the Fair's history telling a story not only of the Fair's past, but of life in the Central Valley over the last 131 years. Recent additions include the new area dedicated to California Chrome, the Valley's only bred, born and fed Kentucky Derby and Preakness Stakes winner, who was recently named Horse of the Year at the Eclipse Awards, voted on by members of the National Thoroughbred Racing Association, Daily Racing Form and the National Turf Writers & Broadcasters Association. The Fair also entered into an agreement with the Fresno Historical Society to restore and then display the old Fresno Courthouse Cupola as part of the Museum. Fundraising is underway for the restoration project. In the last several years, the magnitude of people in the community who have come forward to donate to the Museum has been incredible, reinforcing how important this Museum is to the community. However, the following organizations, individuals and families have played a critical part in making The Big Fresno Fair Museum a reality: Brian Tatarian, Brosi Family, Caglia Family, Chris Pacheco Family, Fresno County Office of Education, Jacobsen Family, Jerry Pacheco Family, Jerry Turner Family, John Harris and Tim Bakman.

In addition to receiving the coveted Merrill Award, The Big Fresno Fair walked away with 19 WFA Achievement Awards, which recognize the best practices by fairs in a variety of categories from advertising creative to community involvement. Below is a complete list of WFA Achievement Awards received:

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First-Place Awards:

- Crisis Management – 2014 Big Fresno Fair Water Conservation Efforts & Education tied to current California Drought
- Non-Profits-Outside Collaboration – Save Mart & FoodMaxx “Feed the Need” Community Food Drive in collaboration with The Salvation Army and Community Food Bank
- New Children’s Program – “Frozen at the Fair” Singing Competition in collaboration with J-Live Entertainment
- Fair Logo Contest – 2014 Big Fresno Fair Theme Logo
- Electronic Newsletter – 2014 Big Fresno Fair Fall InFAIRmation
- Black and White Newspaper Ad – Fresno Bee “Final Day for Fair Fun” Ad
- Any Other Advertising Piece – Save Mart & FoodMaxx “Buy Early & Save” Buttons
- Fair-time Advertising Poster – 2014 Big Fresno Fair Entertainment Poster
- Fair-time Commemorative Poster – 2014 Big Fresno Fair Theme Poster

Second-Place Awards:

- E-blast – 2014 Big Fresno Fair “Concert Update & Savings” Email Blast
- Exhibits Competition – Home Arts Building’s New Pumpkin Carving Contest
- New Featured Event, Exhibit or Program – Neon 1x Splatter Tour Paint Party
- New Conservation Program or Bing Green – 2014 Big Fresno Fair Water Conservation Efforts & Education tied to its existing “Clean & Green” Program
- New Community Outreach Program – Community Mural Project in collaboration with Creative Fresno
- Inspiring Collaborations – 4.0 & Above Program in collaboration with the Fresno County Office of Education, Friends of the Big Fresno Fair, EECU and Toyota
- Anything Goes – 2014 Big Fresno Fair’s Special “California Chrome Day” at the Races

Third-Place Awards:

- Newspaper Ad, Color Print – Fresno Bee 3 col x 21” Entertainment Ad
- New Innovative Use of Technology – The Big Fresno Fair’s New iPhone App
- Volunteers – Fair Education Program

“The Big Fresno Fair continues to be one of the most successful fairs in the western United States,” said Stephen Chambers, Executive Director of the 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.”

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 fifth largest fair in the state of California and represents the 21st District Agricultural Association. More than 650,000 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: Leta Ciavaglia, President; Debbie Jacobsen, Vice President; Jerry Pacheco, Secretary/Treasurer; Elizabeth Hudson; Linda Mae Balakian Hunsucker; Larry Serpa; Ricky Vang; Dora Westerlund and William White. John C. Alkire heads the daily operations in his role as CEO. The 2015 Big Fresno Fair will run October 7 – 18. For more information about The Big Fresno Fair, please visit www.FresnoFair.com.

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