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THE BIG FRESNO FAIR RECEIVES HIGHEST HONOR IN FAIR INDUSTRY AND CREDITS COMMUNITY SUPPORT

FRESNO, CALIFORNIA, February 10, 2012...Fresno County Supervisors Henry Perea and Phil Larson and City of Fresno Councilmember Sal Quintero joined The Big Fresno Fair, The Salvation Army and Community Food Bank in formally announcing that one of the most prestigious award available in the fair industry – the Merrill Award – was presented to the Fair for the unparalleled success achieved during the annual “Feed the Need” Community Food Drive. This great honor was celebrated and formally dedicated to the entire community during a press conference on Friday, February 10th.

The remarkable collaboration of The Salvation Army and Community Food Bank, along with the additional support of Kaiser Permanente Fresno; HandsOn Central California; Girl Scouts of Central California South; Sequoia Council, Boy Scouts of America and local media partners Univision Fresno, Peak Broadcasting and CBS 47 has created an award-winning food drive that positively impacts the community in so many ways. In the last three years the “Feed the Need” Community Food Drive has collected 134 tons of food to help feed those in need of food assistance in the community. Last year alone, the community turned out in record numbers to help collect a total of 108,000 pounds (or 54 tons) of food, beating the collection record for the 2010 Fair food drive.

Today’s press conference was a way for The Big Fresno Fair to thank its food drive partners, and most importantly, dedicate and present the Merrill Award to the community for their support. It is because of the continued participation of the community that these large collection numbers were possible. Their support and willingness to turn out and give is why the “Feed the Need” Community Food Drive currently holds the title as the largest single day, single location food drive in the nation.

“Receiving the Merrill Award for the food drive is particularly special because it’s not just about The Big Fresno Fair – it’s about all the individual organizations that made this event possible – and most importantly the entire community stepping up to the challenge to come out and donate for this cause,” said John C. Alkire, CEO, The Big Fresno Fair. “To see this many different organizations and people working together for a common goal is amazing. We hope that the spirit of giving will continue all year.”

The press conference carried the message of giving. Whether through volunteering or monetary donations – everyone can help make a positive difference in the community. Supervisors Perea and Larson, as well as Councilmember Sal Quintero challenged the community take action and either volunteer or donate at one of the many non-profits providing services to those in need. Every little contribution makes a difference.

- More -

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- If every resident in Fresno County volunteered just five hours of service a month, it would equal over 55 million hours of service annually. Those volunteer efforts would be valued at \$11.7 billion in services rendered to non-profits in need within the community.
- If every Fresno resident donated \$1 to a non-profit, that would make up roughly \$500,000. For the Community Food Bank and The Salvation Army that would translate into \$4 million worth of food to help people in need of emergency assistance because for every \$1 donated, they can buy \$8 worth of food!

“Whether you volunteer or donate money, collectively we can make a big difference,” said Stacy Rianda, Deputy Manager at The Big Fresno Fair. “So give what you can, but remember to give back. If we all work together, we can be part of the positive change in our community.”

The Merrill Award, named after WFA founder Louis S. Merrill, is given to fair programs that demonstrate outstanding vision, leadership and excellence and is the highest honor possible in the fair industry. This is the second Merrill Award for The Big Fresno Fair; the first award was received 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.

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. Nearly 550,000 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: William White, President; Elizabeth Hudson, Vice President; Debbie Jacobsen, Secretary/Treasurer; Tim Bakman; Ron Barsamian; Leta Ciavaglia; Larry Serpa, Wangyee Vang and A. J. Yates. John C. Alkire heads daily operations in his role as CEO. More information about The Big Fresno Fair can be found at www.FresnoFair.com.

About Community Food Bank:

Through a partnership with 170 agencies, Community Food Bank distributes nutritious food to 90,000 food insecure people weekly. Annually, more than 24 million pounds of food are provided to communities in Fresno, Madera and Kings Counties. Community Food Bank supports a variety of hunger and nutrition education programs including the Emergency Food Assistance Program, Food Pantry Distribution, Mobile Pantry/Nutrition on Wheels and Neighborhood Markets and School Backpack Program.

About The Salvation Army:

The Salvation Army is the top-ranked non-profit for responding to domestic social needs in the United States and provides meals to those in need on a daily basis. In 2010, The Fresno County Salvation Army provided food boxes to more than 100,000 men, women and children. This year, distribution is on track to reach at least 150,000 men, women and children. In addition to food relief for the hungry, The Salvation Army has provided successful drug and alcohol rehabilitation services, transitional housing for women and children, eviction prevention, utility assistance, and senior housing in Fresno since 1890. About 83 cents of every dollar raised is used to support those services in the San Joaquin Valley.

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