



In This Family, No One Fights Alone

Written by Kaaren Morgner

1873 marked the establishment of the Fire Department in Merced. That same year Merced's first hospital, a small, one-story wooden building, opened on East North Bear Creek. Both were milestones in the development of our city. Both were dedicated to the health and safety of a growing community. One hundred forty-five years later Merced City Firefighters Local 1479 and Mercy Medical Center Merced continue to seek the welfare of the community.

What began as one firefighter's idea - Let's sell a few t-shirts to support Breast Cancer Awareness- has become a community effort with big possibilities. Fire Captain Morgan Madruga took the lead in 2014 when the firefighter who had been in charge was working a fire out of town and unable to come back.

Prior to that time, the money they raised for Breast Cancer Awareness was donated to a national organization for disbursement. Morgan had a different vision. He let his vision for community and passion as a firefighter come together. "Why send the money away? We don't know where it goes. We can keep it here locally and

know exactly where it goes. It's a better cause! People like to know the money they give stays here. We have so many needs here," Morgan emphasized. The result has been nothing short of wonderful!

The decision to donate directly to the Mercy UC Davis Cancer Center through the Mercy Medical Center Foundation came in 2014. "We want to do some good for our own community," Morgan stated. "A number of our members have been challenged with cancer.

Their family members, their wives. It's something that hits home when family and friends' lives are affected. So this year's theme - In This Family No One Fights Alone - is fitting."

Over the past seven years, Merced City Firefighters Local 1479 has raised over eighty thousand dollars for Mercy UC Davis Cancer Center. Madruga is quick to give credit to team effort and community support for the growth of their philanthropic



Above: Fire Captain Morgan Madruga stepped in to lead the campaign in 2014. The 2018 Breast Cancer Awareness T-shirt Drive raised \$23,647, the largest amount to date in the campaign's history!

POWER OF PHILANTHROPY

project. “Merced City Fire Department leadership support is great, allowing us to wear, sell, and promote our shirts for this project. Steve Carrigan, Merced’s City Manager, met with me personally. He set up meetings so we could speak with the Merced City Schools’ superintendent and the Merced Union High School superintendent. He’s been pushing for us to be successful with this. We can’t say enough about these community leaders and their contribution to this project!”

This year the Firefighters partnered with Code 3 Ink for the

design and printing of the shirts. Morgan explained the fundraiser to owners Krista and Earl Stokes. Earl, a military veteran and the design artist, worked closely with Morgan to bring his vision to life. The firefighters’ theme resonated with Krista, a law enforcement officer. “Our company is only two years old. Code 3 represents the emergency lights and sirens of first responders. Our company is made up of first responders,” Krista noted. “We - police officers, firefighters, EMT’s - arrive first at the scene of an emergency. We’ve been doing that within our own

agencies. We pull together if one of our members is battling cancer. We want to be the first to respond. We have one now battling brain cancer. We pull together! We are happy to be part of this project!”

Greg Hostetler, a local rancher, developer, and cancer survivor, made a generous donation to this project. In 2018 every dollar collected for the shirts is a direct donation to the Mercy UC Davis Cancer Center.

Morgan sees the community response growing each year. “It’s not just selling a few shirts. It’s the support the community feels,



Above: Left to right: Station 55 Firefighters Joe Jarratt, Brent Boyd, Morgan Madruga, and John McMillen gather around the table. “We figure out most of our problems at this table - what could be and should be. This is our outlet. Where we can talk about calls. Where a brand new guy can talk about the experience. But mostly we ridicule and poke fun! Sounds a lot like family!” - Morgan Madruga.



Above: Morgan says, “Our shirt is not a banner for everybody. The Code 3 Ink logo (our designer) is on one sleeve, and Mr. Hostetler’s company (Stonefield Homes) logo is on the other sleeve. The rest is all about cancer. That’s how we want it!”

the stories we hear. My mom had cancer, my dad has cancer... Thank you for doing this!” he reflected.

Kanwar Singh, director of Mercy UC Davis Cancer Center, affirms the patient’s need for support during cancer treatment. “Support is very important before, during and after treatment. Providing patient-centric services is a priority for the Mercy UC Davis Cancer Center.” Generous giving through the Foundation sustains and expands support services for patients and families fighting cancer. The Foundation has funded a patient transportation program, biweekly Cancer Support Group, and new infusion chairs for patients undergoing chemotherapy. Providing exceptional care to patients close to home is the heart of our Foundation’s mission.

“We want this to become something big. In a city with ninety

thousand people, we’re selling nine hundred to a thousand shirts. Somewhere we’re not connecting. We’ve got to keep reaching!” Morgan exclaimed.

Groups like Merced City Firefighters Local 1479 are valuable partners to Mercy Medical Center Merced Foundation. They extend the reach of the Foundation into the community. According to Shelby Davidson, Annual Giving and Events Coordinator, “Third-party fundraisers are ambassadors for the Foundation in the community. People give when they feel passionate about a particular cause; third-party events help us... these supporters have a deep emotional connection with our mission.”

Giving is rooted in respect. Giving is rooted in dignity. For Morgan’s team, being involved with the community and encouraging

us as citizens to take an active part reminds us of our roots. We are people who can show up, be leaders, and build up new leaders. “Merced is a small community. At one time it was a very close community. I know that it’s not that far from being able to come back to that,” he assured.

The alarm sounds faintly to rouse those who are asleep and unaware. It builds in volume to set the team in motion. By the time fire engines leave the station, Code 3 is in full operation. First responders show up and lead. Merced City Firefighters Local 1479 sounded the alarm and rallied the community inviting us all to join them in the fight alongside families touched by cancer. “In this family, no one fights alone!” It is a fitting phrase for us all.

Mercy Medical Center Merced Foundation applauds the Merced City Firefighters Local 1479 for their passion and vision for our community. They embody the spirit of philanthropy through their gifts of time, leadership, and generous support of the Mercy UC Davis Cancer Center.