

CAASE Award Entry

Category: Community Impact

Project: Siren the Rescue Dog

Individuals Involved in the Project	Founder Harvey L. Hall Lavonne Hall Mark Corum Heather Lee Alex Montgomery
Situational Analysis	<p>No doubt, an emergency medical situation can be a frightening and emotional experience for anyone, but particularly children. Whether responding for them or a loved one, the incident can be overwhelming not only because of the medical issue at hand, but the commotion of a 9-1-1 response of emergency vehicles arriving with lights and sirens blaring.</p> <p>To that end, ambulance services have often used programs like ambulance demos to introduce children to EMS and let them know that Paramedics and EMTs are friendly community helpers who will be there in a time of need.</p>
Project Goals	<p>In 2005, Founder Harvey L. Hall and his wife, Lavonne, were looking for a fresh way to connect their ambulance service with kids. The answer was as close as their lovable family pets—two Saint Bernard's named Siren and Rescue.</p> <p>The fabled history of St. Bernard's assisting monks seeking missing or trapped travelers in the Alps made the breed a perfect mascot for the ambulance service.</p>
Planning & Implementation	<p>By combining the names of their two beloved K-9s, Siren the Rescue Dog was created.</p> <p>Next, they researched and found a costume vendor to create a larger than life mascot for Hall Ambulance.</p> <p>Siren made its debut at the 2005 Kidfest event sponsored by NBC affiliate KGET-TV 17 in Bakersfield. It was an instant hit with the kids who clamored to hug and take their picture with Siren the Rescue Dog.</p> <p>The second phase of the project was to create a pint-sized plush of the mascot that the ambulance crews could provide to the sick and injured children they responded to.</p>

	<p>Pictures of the mascot were sent to the selected vendor to ensure continuity. The manufacturer believed in the program and in fact provided a discount over what a retailer would typically pay for the same type of plush.</p>
<p>Project Results</p>	<p>Hall Ambulance Paramedics, EMTs, and Registered Nurses give out approximately 7,000 Siren cuddle toys to the children they care for each year. The Hall Paramedics and EMTs can attest to the change in a child’s demeanor after being presented with a Siren cuddle toy—which often results in a smile. It gives them something to focus on during the care they receive while enroute to the hospital.</p> <p>The success of the Siren cuddle toy is so great that it has since become a part of the ambulance medical supply inventory.</p> <p>The Siren mascot has become a popular attraction at community events including the Cal State University Bakersfield Roadrunner Basketball mascot night, the annual Bakersfield Christmas parade, school carnivals, National Night Out, and health fairs.</p>
<p>Impact</p>	<p>Each month, Hall Ambulance receives several positive comments through the Company’s Quality Survey from parents expressing how much their child loved receiving a Siren to comfort them during their transport to the hospital.</p> <p>The impact of Siren the Rescue Dog could not be better illustrated than through an article that appeared in Hall Ambulance’s newsletter, <i>The HallMark</i>, which told the story of a child who had a large Cerebellum Tumor that required aggressive treatment. The Siren plush he received from a Hall Paramedic accompanied him through multiple surgeries as well as trips to Disneyland, Legoland, and Los Angeles Dodgers baseball games. No matter where Jacob went, Siren was always right by his side.</p> <p>One day, the boy misplaced Siren. Frantic, his parents searched everywhere to no avail. Desperate, they reached out to Hall Ambulance and after learning of his plight, the Company coordinated a surprise visit with the Siren mascot arriving in an ambulance to surprise the child and give him a new Siren cuddle toy.</p>
<p>Cost/Budget</p>	<p>A replacement mascot costume was purchased in 2017 for \$1,200. Currently, the Company distributes approximately 7,000 of the Siren cuddle toys per year, at a cost of \$7.33 each.</p>

THE HallMark

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Siren... a Boy's Best Friend

Jacob Vigil got the surprise of his life after misplacing his Siren the Rescue Dog stuffed animal.



Siren... a Boy's Best Friend

Like countless other girls and boys, Siren the Rescue Dog provided security and comfort to Jacob Vigil, who suffered from a brain tumor. The two were recently re-united after Jacob accidentally left Siren behind at a restaurant.

by Darrin Stacey, Manager, Non-Emergency Services

Jacob Vigil has one little known secret—he loves “Siren” the Rescue Dog. Siren has been with Jacob for 3 years. They were introduced to each other when a Hall Ambulance Paramedic crew arrived to transport young Jacob to Kaiser Sunset Hospital. As Jacob’s father, Justin, explains, Jacob was a normal 4 year-old-boy playing and having fun when he suddenly had problems standing. He and Jacob’s mother took him to Bakersfield Memorial Hospital’s Emergency Room. There, they learned Jacob had a large Cerebellum Tumor and would require more aggressive treatment.

When the paramedic crew arrived, they found this was no ordinary transport. He found a scared little boy whose parents were trying to stay calm so as not to upset Jacob. This is when the crew introduced Siren to Jacob. His face lit up and he clutched the stuffed animal tight. After blood draws, IV’s, and multiple tests, Jacob had something that could put a little smile on his face. Jacob quickly built a bond like no other with Siren, and even gave him a name, Rocky. He clutched Rocky to his chest the entire time he

was in the ambulance.

Once at Kaiser Sunset, they learned Jacob would need surgery immediately. Not understanding what was going on, Jacob knew his friend, Rocky, would help him through it. Jacob went into surgery with Rocky held tight to his chest. After a successful surgery, Jacob emerged from the operating room still clutching him. This was the first of many surgeries Rocky helped Jacob through; over the next year, he would have three more. Each time, he had some sense of security knowing Rocky would be with him.

Fast forward almost two years and Jacob has recovered from his surgeries and no others are on the horizon. As any young boy dreams about, Jacob had many things he wanted to do and see. But Jacob wouldn’t do them alone. He would not go if Rocky couldn’t come with him. So for his trip to Disneyland, LEGOLAND, and a Los Angeles Dodger game, Rocky was right by his side. Jacob also enjoys the beach, and likes to play in the sand with Rocky by his side.

One of Jacob’s most kept Rocky secrets is he took him

to school. Jacob knew that other kids may not understand his connection with Rocky so prior to this night; he never took him to school. Rocky is Jacob's best friend, and it was important to him that Rocky see what he did all day. So, at a Back-to-School Night, Jacob had his mother put Rocky in her purse and took him with them. When they arrived at school, Rocky was peeking out as they walked around. When the coast was clear, Jacob took Rocky out and showed him the classroom.

Jacob and Rocky enjoyed everything together, even going out to restaurants for dinner. Not too long ago, this led to Rocky being lost. Jacob was heartbroken and thought he was gone forever. His parents scrambled looking for him, but to no avail. They contacted Hall Ambulance desperately seeking a replacement knowing Jacob still needed his security. When Mr. Hall learned of the need, a new Siren was given to the family. When they gave him to Jacob, he once again clutched him as tight as he could and his parents could see the relief Jacob had in his face.

You see, Siren the Rescue Dog is not just a stuffed animal. He is the mascot for Hall Ambulance and makes appearances at special events. When Siren learned of Jacob's story, he knew that he must meet this special brave young man. Siren and his helpers got to work and arranged a surprise visit. Siren knew that Jacob would be at his grandparent's house one evening and made his move. He arrived in style, lights flashing and siren blaring in the front seat of a paramedic ambulance. Siren was so excited his seatbelt could barely hold him in. Once the shock of seeing Siren had subsided somewhat, he met Siren in the middle of the yard with plenty of hugs and high-fives. Jacob still could not believe what was happening. Siren gave Jacob a tour of his ambulance and even let him sit in the driver's seat sounding the horn. Siren also introduced Jacob to Rocky's brother when he delivered another rescue dog. Jacob held his new friend just as tight as his other. And, as only a child can do, Jacob named his new friend, Rocky 2. Without a doubt, this will be an event neither Jacob nor Rocky will ever forget.

As many may know, children bond to something as a sense of security. Getting this security in a time of need can have a dramatic impact on their care and outcome. This small stuffed animal made it possible for Jacob to endure something he knew nothing about. Mr. Hall developed Siren the Rescue Dog several years ago for just this type of



Though he could hardly believe his eyes, Jacob was all smiles, when a bigger-than-life Siren the Rescue Dog made a surprise visit to Jacob at his grandparent's residence.

situation. Over the years, thousands of these stuffed animals have been distributed to children just like Jacob. Not only was the stuffed animal created, but a mascot as well. One young and eager individual, Alex Montgomery, took the volunteer role as the mascot on whenever called upon. I don't think Alex understood what an impact he would have until the first time he stepped out and saw the reaction of the children. He saw the smiles on their faces and started to get hugs just because he was there. Alex knew from that day on, whenever possible, he would be honored to handle the role.

The visit with Jacob was a happy and sad time for Alex. As he has grown over the years, his life is taking him in new directions, and he will have to retire from the mascot position. Alex has dedicated numerous hours of service supporting Hall Ambulance and the communities they serve. Even though you could not see his face, you could tell he was grinning from ear to ear whenever he played the role. In a recent discussion I had with Alex, he said that it is something he loves to do and will miss it very much. *

HallMark

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ADVANCED LIFE SUPPORT - PARAMEDIC UNIT



Damariz Meets Siren

Adorable Damariz was surprised to meet Siren the Rescue Dog during a recent visit to the Rosamond ambulance station.

Damariz Meets Siren the Rescue Dog

by: Mark Corum, director of media services

When Damariz Diaz, a student at Community Action Partnership's Head Start Child Development Center in Rosamond, and her father created a diorama of Hall Ambulance's station on Diamond Street for a class project, little did they know the positive response it would elicit from so many.

The project was developed by Teacher Tomi Perkins as a way to increase male involvement and family engagement participation. The community building study activity received 100% participation with fathers, uncles, grandfathers, and big brothers helping the students build their various projects.

Diaz and Perkins delivered her completed project to the station on May 19 in hopes that the scaled replica, complete with paper shrubbery, driveway, ambulance bay, and the familiar block HALL on the building exterior would be placed on display in the foyer for the paramedics, EMTs, and visitors to enjoy.

Word about the diorama made it back to Mr. Hall who was delighted to see the student's interpretation of the ambulance station. In appreciation, he suggested that perhaps Siren the Rescue Dog, the Company's mascot could travel to Rosamond to say thank you to Damariz and her father.

On June 1, Damariz and her family received a VIP tour of Post 15 by Paramedic Field Supervisor Mike Zapiain.



Paramedic Field Supervisor Mike Zapiain presented Damariz with a Honorary Jr. Paramedic Certificate signed by Mr. Hall. Left: The diorama that Damariz created with her father.

Damariz really enjoyed seeing the radio room, living quarters for the paramedics and EMTs who work 48-hour shifts, and getting to climb inside a paramedic ambulance.

Her face lit up with excitement as Siren made his appearance from behind the

ambulance. Without hesitation, she ran over and gave Siren a big hug.

The visit wrapped up with Field Supervisor Zapiain presenting Damariz with a certificate making her an honorary Hall Ambulance Junior Paramedic.

You can watch a video of Damariz's visit at <http://bit.ly/2sVkb4E> *



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