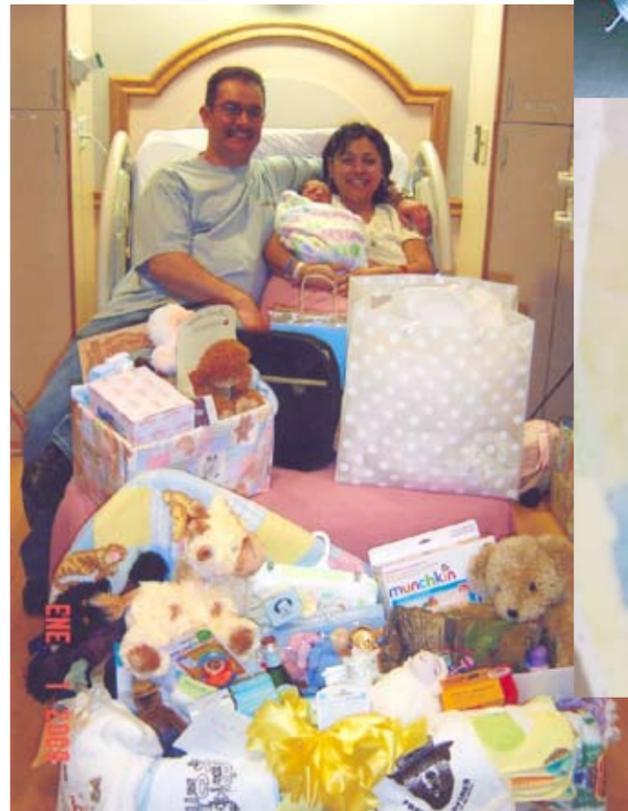


THE BANNER BASKET



By Leah Sandberg, fire prevention specialist, Lassen-Modoc Unit



We take family very seriously at the Lassen-Modoc Unit. The first thing you will notice when you visit our headquarters office in Susanville, is the wall of baby pictures. Photos of children, grandchildren, nieces, and nephews fill up three huge bulletin boards. Everyone knows when you take a new picture a copy goes to Shirley Barber, the unit receptionist. Shirley can always find space for one more photo on the wall. We are certainly reminded each time we visit headquarters of how blessed we are.

That's why the idea of giving a basket of items to the first baby born each year at Banner Hospital in Lassen County had

such appeal. It was an opportunity to show how thankful we felt by giving to someone else. We hoped, if the family was willing, we would add one more little addition to our family bulletin board: our "Fire Prevention Baby" for 2009.

On November 18, 2008, the call went out for donations for our "Banner Basket." Baby items started showing up left and right: diapers, t-shirts, blankets, baby monitors, everything needed to welcome a new baby into the family. By December 19 the first box purchased to hold the items had to be returned for a larger one. On December 30, the items were placed into the box and taken to

the hospital. The hospital staff was surprised at the size of the box and the array of items donated.

On January 2, 2009, our Fire Prevention Baby, Aaron Manuel Velasco, arrived weighing six pounds, seven ounces and measuring 20 inches long. His mom and dad, Manuel and Maria Velasco, were overjoyed by the donations and overwhelmed with delight by the arrival of their first child. The Lassen-Modoc Unit was pleased to be able to give them a good start as a family and to wish them a fire safe future.

Making A Difference for MDA

By Scott McLean, fire captain, Butte Unit

Every year hundreds of thousands of Americans are diagnosed with various forms of Muscular Dystrophy and Lou Gehrig's disease. To help raise money for research and assistance, CAL FIRE has teamed up with the Muscular Dystrophy Association (MDA).

The fire service as a whole has long been a supporter of MDA with the "Fill the Boot" campaign. In fact, in the department's first year of participating, CAL FIRE firefighters raised over \$140,000. In 2008 half of the department's 21 units participated raising enough money to put the department third in the state and 17th in the nation for funds raised. With CAL FIRE being the 3rd largest fire department in the United States, the employee's overwhelming support to the MDA cause has been remarkable.

The history of fire department's role in MDA fundraising began in 1952 when the father of a child diagnosed with a neuro-muscular disease, in desperation, sought out the aid of George Graney, IAFF (International Association of Fire Fighters) Local 718 member and the help of Boston Fire Engine Company 1. Immediately, twenty firefighters set out to conduct a door-to-door canister drive that raised \$5,000 to help with the child's medical expenses.

In August of 1954, Graney spoke at IAFF's annual convention and gained unanimous approval of a proclamation that MDA be established as the association's "charity of choice." This marked the beginning of a formal and long-standing bond between the IAFF and MDA.

Since then, firefighters have taken this vision and made it their mission, raising funds in a myriad of ways: placing collec-

tion jars in stores and restaurants, sponsoring charity softball games, running auctions and their signature fund-raising activity, the MDA "Fill the Boot" drive.

The IAFF has emerged as the single largest sponsor of MDA, contributing nearly \$300 million since 1954. This year's 43rd Annual Jerry Lewis Labor Day Telethon netted over \$65 million through various fundraisers throughout the nation and of that amount, over \$27 million was raised by the IAFF alone.

The funds raised from MDA fundraising have provided scientific researchers the opportunity to continue working diligently toward dramatic breakthroughs. Unfortunately, there are many more that are needed. A recent breakthrough has given life to individuals who suffer with Pompe's disease which strikes mostly very young children who would rarely see their first birthday. But because of this scientific breakthrough these children will now live well into adulthood. You can only imagine the potential use of this kind of research for other forms of neuro-muscular diseases.

To get involved and to support the "Fill the Boot" challenge, all one needs is a boot and a strong willingness to spend a couple of hours making a difference. As plans for the 2009 fundraising efforts are underway, CAL FIRE's MDA leadership continue to urge employees and members of the public to remember how their support and donation can truly help those affected by muscular dystrophy.

For more information on how you can volunteer or help. Contact the CAL FIRE / MDA State Coordinator Scott McLean at mclean42@comcast.net.

