FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Pacific Marine Mammal Center Launches Seals Sparking Smiles

A free community give back program geared to provide a memorable experience for children facing extraordinary challenges in their lives.

LAGUNA BEACH, CA Thursday, December 10, 2020 - Earlier this year, Pacific Marine Mammal Center (PMMC) launched Seals Sparking Smiles (SSS). This exciting new addition to the organization’s line-up of free community “give back” programs is geared to provide a memorable and joyful experience for children (up to age 21) who are going through severe personal challenges in their own lives. This includes children diagnosed with critical illnesses, in families going through debilitating financial hardship, who are victims of neglect, abuse, or abandonment, and more.

Children are given a personalized behind-the-scenes visit to hear the stories of individual patients who were rescued because of injuries or health issues and observe them as they recover. Children are invited to witness a sea lion release on a subsequent date to see a recovery come full circle. Participants are recognized as ambassadors for the animals and invited to an annual luncheon with other participants from that year. And finally, the children take home a PMMC ‘bundle’ to help remember their experience.

“Our marine mammals can have such an inspirational and joyful impact. We hope that these intimate experiences can offer much-needed smiles to children going through so much,” says PMMC CEO, Peter Chang. “In addition, this program absolutely impacts everyone involved, including our team of staff and volunteers that get to meet these wonderful children and their families”

To date PMMC has facilitated three (3) programs, including one over the weekend with the Deek family through a collaboration with Irvine-based Miracles for Kids. Zain Deek, age 7, was diagnosed with Hodgkin’s Lymphoma in June 2020.

“It was a difficult process for the family because she went through a year of tests, biopsies, and procedures before they were able to determine what was wrong. On top of this, dad lost his job due to COVID-19. With the struggle of trying to make ends meet while going to chemotherapy treatments and labs for Zain, it was almost impossible to find time to be together as a family.” says Sapphira Roberson, Community Programs Manager at Miracles for Kids. “When she had to shave her hair off, it was a very emotional event for Zain and her siblings. They cried seeing their sister in pain and the changes her body had undergone. Mom and Dad do their best to keep their children’s spirits up, and Zain tries to smile and stay positive. With the help of Miracles for Kids, they get financial relief so they can focus on Zain’s treatment, and they are so grateful to be able to visit places like Pacific Marine Mammal Center. They get a chance to spend time together as a family and make meaningful memories, and a chance for mom and dad to bring their kids somewhere they otherwise wouldn’t be able to go.”

"We had such a great visit with the Deek family this past Saturday," says PMMC Director of Education, Kirsten Donald. "The kids were all so engaged, which made it very fun. They were also thrilled when we mentioned that we would be inviting them to a special sea lion release in the late Spring.”

Pacific Marine Mammal Center also worked with Miracles for Kids earlier this year with their Buy 1 Give 1 Program. For every order placed with PMMC a Sea Life Bundle Packs was donated to the Miracles for Kids bundle program to critically ill children.
For more information on PMMC Community Programs, you can check out PMMC’s website.

The Deek family enjoyed a day out at PMMC through the Seals Sparking Smiles program.

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About (Pacific Marine Mammal Center)

The Pacific Marine Mammal Center rescues, rehabilitates and releases marine mammals and inspires ocean stewardship through research, education and collaboration. PMMC is a non-profit 501 (c)(3) organization. Our Tax-ID number is: 95-3680896

20612 Laguna Canyon Road | Laguna Beach, California, 92651 | (949) 494-3050

Media Contact: PMMC

Name: Krysta Higuchi
Title: Events and Public Relations Manager
Phone: (720) 244-1871
Email address: khiguchi@pacificmmc.org

About (Miracles for Kids)

Miracles for Kids is one of the only organizations on the West Coast that provides monthly financial assistance, subsidized housing, mental health services and wellness activities to families with a critically-ill child. The services help create stability when families are crumbling from the financial and emotional devastation of fighting for their child’s life. Founded in 2002, Miracles for Kids has a main office in Irvine, CA and a subsidized housing complex, Miracle Manor, in Orange, CA. To learn more about how Miracles for Kids has joined forces with parents and loved ones, visit www.miraclesforkids.org.