

For Immediate Release

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AFTER A YEAR OF VIRTUAL PROGRAMMING, ALISA ANN RUCH BURN FOUNDATION WELCOMES BURN-INJURED CHILDREN BACK TO IN-PERSON CHAMP CAMP THIS SUMMER

Sanger, CA – Last year, due to a worldwide pandemic, and for the health and safety of campers and volunteers, the Alisa Ann Ruch Burn Foundation hosted its first ever Virtual Champ Camp. More than 157 campers registered for this virtual experience, which included “camp-in-a-box” shipped to campers’ homes, live online sessions and dozens of pre-recorded lessons, activities and messages from camp counselors and staff. This year, after much planning and coordination with public health officials, the Alisa Ann Ruch Burn Foundation will welcome 100 burn-injured children from throughout California to in-person Champ Camp, the nation’s largest and one of the longest-running camps for burn-injured children.

The 35th Annual Champ Camp will be held June 12-18, 2021 at Wonder Valley Ranch in Sanger, CA. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, camp will be limited to only 100 campers, as compared to the 150+ campers who have been able to attend in the past. Burn-injured children from all over California will travel to the Alisa Ann Ruch Burn Foundation’s 35th Annual Champ Camp, which provides a free, safe and fun summer camp environment for children ages 5 to 17 as they face one of life’s toughest and most painful challenges: severe burn injuries. More than 2,000 children have been through the program at no charge since its inception in 1986, thanks to donations from generous supporters throughout California.

“Last year was challenging for all of us, but not nearly as challenging as it was for burn-injured children, who already struggle with feelings of isolation and loneliness,” said Jennifer Radics-Johnson, Executive Director for the Foundation. “Burns can weaken the immune system, so the body is less able to fight off threats. COVID-19 poses a particularly serious threat to some burn survivors. Social isolation also poses a threat to many burn survivors. Our camp staff, Board and volunteers worked really hard to consider all of the challenges and benefits of hosting an in-person camp this year. We are proud of the protocols and safety guidelines we have put in place, thanks to the support and guidance of our local public health officials and our medical staff, in order to ensure a safe and fun experience for burn-injured children. We can’t wait to see those smiling faces and hear that boisterous laughter again this summer at Champ Camp!”

Founded in 1986, Champ Camp is the nation’s largest and one of the longest running camp for burn-injured children. Providing a safe place to get away from stares and unwanted attention associated with their burn injuries, Champ Camp introduces new and challenging physical activities and allows campers to have fun and just be kids.

“We are extremely excited to see our campers. It has been so long,” said Chris Bridger, Champ Camp Director. “We are really excited about the opportunity to get back together again June 12-18. The number one thing that we focus on is the safety of all of our campers and staff, so we put a lot of work into our Communicable Disease Plan to make sure that everyone feels comfortable with attending camp this year. We are still going to have a Virtual Camp experience for campers and families that may not feel comfortable attending. We want everyone to be welcomed at Champ Camp, in-person or virtually.”

Campers come from all over California and the world to attend Champ Camp. More than 50 Camp Counselors support the program, volunteering to provide a unique summer experience for campers. Many of the volunteers are fire service and health care professionals from around the state and beyond. At Champ Camp, kids enjoy go-kart races, pool parties, swimming, fishing, zip lining, horseback riding and much more!

The Alisa Ann Ruch Burn Foundation (AARBF) was founded in 1971 after the tragic death of Alisa Ann in a backyard barbeque accident. Its mission is to significantly reduce the number of burn injuries through prevention education and to enhance the quality of life of those affected by burn injuries in California. AARBF's burn survivor services programs engage communities of peers and support networks to help build confidence and provide social opportunities, connects them with resources for coping with their injuries, and supports burn survivors' immediate basic human needs. To learn more about the Alisa Ann Ruch Burn Foundation or Champ Camp, call (800) 242-BURN or visit the foundation's website, www.aarbf.org.

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Champ Camp will be a closed camp in 2021: In accordance with our Communicable Disease Plan and COVID-19 Addendum, outside guests and visitors will not be allowed at camp this year. Photos and video footage will be provided to media upon request. Virtual interviews and tours are available via video conference; Facetime, and phone. Contact Erika Mendoza at 559-286-0710 ext. 17 or emendoza@aarbf.org for more details.

Check out our Media Press Kit online for photos, statistics, fast facts and more: <https://www.aarbf.org/multimedia-resource-library/media-press-kit/>