



JOINT PRESS RELEASE: OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS

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RUSD Elementary Schools, Fire Department Celebrate 10 Years of a Proven Drowning Prevention Education Program

The month of May is Drowning Prevention Month and it has been a decade since the Rialto Fire Department formed a partnership with the Rialto Unified School District that simply *saves young students' lives*.

Rialto Firefighters and Paramedics will present their Water Safety Program, *Stewie the Duck Learns to Swim*, to all first grade students in the RUSD, beginning Monday, May 15, 2017, 9:00 a.m. Each year, a different RUSD elementary school is chosen for the kickoff. This year, the kickoff is at Hughbanks Elementary School, 2241 North Apple Street in Rialto. "And we are ready!" smiled Hughbanks Principal, **Dr. Monte Stewart**.

Rialto firefighters/paramedics will present the three important water safety rules by visiting classrooms and reading the book, *Stewie the Duck Learns to Swim*. Afterward, the students will receive a tour of Rialto Fire Department apparatus, including memory photos by the large fire trucks. *Stewie* may also make an appearance.

"Drowning is a leading cause of death for children in California," stated Rialto Fire Chief **Sean Grayson**. "If we can educate and help eliminate any statistic of children drowning, we should do our part. We appreciate the District's support. This is an important investment for our community's youth."

Rialto Firefighter, **Matt Payne**, introduced the program to the RUSD 2006. The District adopted the educational program in hopes of decreasing children's drowning statistic. The first grade students in the RUSD have displayed positive responses, according to Payne.

"Rialto Unified is a strong, receptive district when it comes to opening doors for us to educate the students. The teachers, support sites and administration, at every level, have been cooperative to work with," added Payne. "Since we began, a decade ago, no child going through this program has drowned and that's reality."

RUSD Superintendent, **Dr. Cuauhtémoc Avila** stated, "Safety is the Board of Education, and our education community's main focus, as it should be. I observed how excited our students are as they engage in this program, which not only promotes literacy, provides knowledge on top water safety concerns, but also teaches life-long lessons that stay with our young students. We are appreciative to the fire service for this program."

For further information on the RFD Water Safety Program, please contact either **RUSD's Communications Director, Syeda Jafri**, at 820-7700, ext. 2123 or **Matt V. Payne** from the **Rialto Fire Department**, at (909) 224-2906.