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## Young Cancer Patient Impacts MOFD Firefighter

By Nick Marnell



Finley Brown, 6, and MOFD firefighter-paramedic Lucas Lambert at the Oct. 3 MOFD open house. Photo courtesy Moraga-Orinda Fire District

raise money for the Brown family to go on a trip to

Disneyland Park after Finley completes her cancer treatments. The MOFD Professional Firefighters Association is sponsoring a raffle of a dinner for up to six at fire station 44 on Saturday, Dec. 12. Tickets cost \$5 each or five for \$20, and they may be purchased at any of the five district fire stations. The association, with the support of the district, hopes to raise \$1,500 for the family.

When he delivered a firefighters' calendar to Finley at her home, Lambert sprung another surprise. Provided he obtains all authorizations, Lambert told Finley that the crew plans to transport her to her final chemotherapy treatment Dec. 21 in a district emergency vehicle. The confident, self-assured young girl nearly jumped to the ceiling.

"I wouldn't have thought that going to chemo could be that exciting for anyone," said Brown.

Cancer is a disease emblazoned in firefighters' psyches. A 2014 study released by the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health reported that firefighters experienced a higher rate of cancer than the rest of the population, often caused by the flame-retardant chemicals in the gear designed to protect them.

"It's a lot for a little one to go through," said Brown. "Her little brother is experiencing this, too. When we take Finley to the hospital, he misses mommy, and he wants his sister home." She

A 6-year old girl marched up to the fire engine parked at the Moraga Pear Festival, dragging her brother and babysitter directly toward firefighter-paramedic Lucas Lambert. "Some kids are shy, some are hesitant, but not her," said Lambert, staffing the Moraga-Orinda Fire District apparatus on display that day. "She certainly got all of our attention."

Finley Brown introduced herself to the crew and she explained in detail what she had gone through this year. "She told us about a cancer operation she underwent that removed a tumor the size of a baseball from her kidney," said Lambert. "And she showed us her scars as she freely discussed the whole process." Finley was diagnosed with cancer three days after her 6th birthday in June. She has completed all of her radiation treatments and is undergoing six months of chemotherapy.

"I was thinking, this little girl has been going through hell, and was still smiling, not a care in the world," said Lambert. "It didn't slow her down one bit."

"We teach our kids that, whenever you see a police officer, a firefighter, a soldier, you thank them for keeping you safe," said her mom, A.J. Brown, who works at the Moraga California Academy of Performing Arts, where Finley dances. "She is well-spoken, and she went right up to the guys and told them what was happening."

So rapt was the MOFD crew that they organized a fundraiser, Dinner for Finley, to help

said that Finley's cancer is treatable, with a 90 percent survival rate.

"It's not like you can opt out," continued Brown. "You step up and perform. And you marvel at the number of lives she is touching."

None likely touched more than the firefighter who delivered Finley and her brother a custom set of firefighters' turnout gear.

"Fireman Lucas is my friend," she said. "He's kind and he does really nice things for us."

"As if we didn't have enough reasons to love firefighters already," said Brown.



At the Brown residence, top row, from left: engineer-paramedic Matt Epperson, firefighter-paramedic Jared Costanza, captain Mike Rattary and firefighter-paramedic Dave Iman; bottom row: Cooper Brown, Finley Brown and firefighter-paramedic Lucas Lambert

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[back](#)

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