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CHUMASH FIRE DEPARTMENT TEACHES FIRST GRADERS ABOUT FIRE PREPAREDNESS

SANTA YNEZ, CA — February 26, 2024 — The Chumash Fire Department recently hosted a group of young students to learn about fire preparedness at the tribe’s fire station on the Santa Ynez Reservation. The fire crew hosted 17 children from the Santa Ynez Valley Christian Academy, teaching the first graders about everything from firefighting tools to forest management.

The Chumash firefighters began with a lesson on simple fire safety techniques such as “stop, drop and roll” and what to do in a fire emergency. They then gave a presentation on the various fire strategies and tools the department uses when out on fire assignments across the country, including how to use a pick and flathead axe and the advancements in thermal imaging cameras, which allow firefighters to see if a fire is inside the walls of a burning structure and if people are trapped. From there, crewmembers demonstrated their daily drills, including “donning” personal protective equipment (PPE), a drill that involves putting on 40 pounds of firefighting equipment in

less than two minutes, including boots, pants, coat, gloves, hood, helmet, self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) and face piece.

The most exciting part of the afternoon for the children was when they toured the inside of a fire truck and were given a chance to use a fire hose that sprays as much as 500 gallons of water per minute.

“Our students had a fun, unique visit, and left with a far better understanding of what to do in a fire emergency,” said Shelly Leeson, first grade teacher for the Santa Ynez Valley Christian Academy. “A big thanks to the Chumash Fire Department for taking the time to teach our students about fire safety and prioritizing fire education for our first graders.”

The afternoon concluded at Kitiyepumu’ Park on the Santa Ynez Reservation with a special visit from Smokey Bear, complete with hotdogs and snacks prepared by the fire crew.

“The Chumash Fire Department takes great pride in helping protect our tribal community and beyond,” said Gilbert Romero, Assistant Fire Chief for the Chumash Fire Department. “Part of this public service is educating the community, especially the younger generations, about what they can do to prevent fires and what to do in a life-threatening emergency.”

For more information about the Chumash Fire Department’s programs and initiatives, visit www.chumash.gov/fire.

Established in 2006, the Chumash Fire Department was created as a means for the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians to have fire, emergency, medical and

disaster services for Chumash Community Members living on the Santa Ynez Reservation. Today, the department also serves as a resource for the greater community, combatting fires and protecting people and property throughout the region. Through an arrangement with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), the Chumash Fire Department regularly fights fires in some of the most fire-prone states, including Arizona, New Mexico, here in California, and more.

The fire department takes part in semi-annual training, learning new skills and brushing up on their firefighting fundamentals. Mandated by the state of California, these training courses involve 36 hours of hands-on training and four hours of classroom training. The department also has a unique focus on cultural resource preservation, an approach that its crewmembers use to protect Chumash cultural resources on ancestral land and on sacred sites throughout the country.

The Santa Ynez Indian Reservation is located in Santa Barbara County and was established and officially recognized by the federal government on December 27, 1901. Today, the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians remains the only federally recognized Chumash tribe in the nation. The tribe is a self-governing sovereign nation and follows the laws set forth in its tribal constitution.