



NEWS RELEASE

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Contact:
Jackie Broach, public information officer
Phone: (843) 545-3164
E-mail: jbroach@gtcounty.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Midway firefighters give child with cerebral palsy a day to remember

GEORGETOWN COUNTY — Hunter Moseley, a 5-year-old Virginia boy diagnosed with cerebral palsy, has been to a lot of fire stations in his short life. He loves them and makes it a point to visit one in every city he goes to.

But his visit to Midway Fire Rescue last month is one that's likely to stand out in his mind for years to come.

With just two days to plan, staff at Midway came together, donating money and time to create an experience for Hunter unlike any he'd ever had before. They were asked to let Hunter take a tour of the department's headquarters station in Litchfield while he was in the area, after a tour at a station in another county fell through. But Brian Michna and Joe Palombi, the firefighters who took the lead in arranging Hunter's visit to Midway, didn't want to stop there.

Hunter definitely got his tour of Midway. But Michna and Palombi also arranged to have a stretch Hummer limo pick him up at his hotel room, along with his dad and his sister, Carolyn, 12, and take him on a tour of several other stations on the Grand Strand.

While Hunter's dad knew what was in store, it was all a surprise for the boy. When he saw the limo and five firefighters waiting inside to ride with him, his face lit up, said Palombi, who is a part-time limo driver for Carolina Limousines and who volunteered his services for the day. He also got his company to donate use of the limo.

"I don't care if it thundered all day and traffic was bad all day, the smile on that kid's face made everything worth it," he said.

It was actually Michna who laid the groundwork for Hunter's visit. He follows Hunter and his adventures through a Team Hunter page on Facebook that Hunter's dad set up. About 3 months ago, Michna saw a post about a stop in Greenville and sent a message inviting the Moseleys to visit Midway if they were in the area. The Moseleys were headed in this direction, it turned out, but were already planning to visit another station. Michna left the offer on the table and got a call in July when the Moseleys' original plans fell through.

Despite the short notice and the fact that Michna was out of town on a family trip, he wanted to come through for Hunter and knew his fellow firefighters would support the idea. He started

working his way up the chain of command for permission, then called Palombi, who shares his philanthropic nature, and they started tossing ideas back and forth. Before they knew it, they had a full day planned including a limo, lunch on the Murrells Inlet Marsh Walk at the Dead Dog Saloon, gear from the various stations they stopped at (for Hunter and Carolyn), including T-shirts and personalized helmet shields, and more.

The rest of Midway's staff was quick to jump on board, either greeting Hunter at Midway if they were on shift, joining him for the tour if they weren't, or donating money if they couldn't be there.

"I can't explain how impressed I am with this department and all the guys in it," Michna said. "It's been like that with a lot of things here. That's just how we do it here."

As part of his tour, Hunter got to ride in the front of a fire truck at Murrells Inlet-Garden City Fire Department.

"All you heard for five minutes was the siren and air horn," Palombi said.

At Midway, Mike Morris, a fire inspector, took Hunter for a ride in the 1962 fire engine the department uses in its educational efforts. That was a first-time experience for Hunter. Then, after they looked around the station, they put "Sponge Bob" on the TV, Hunter sat down, put his feet up on the table, wrapped an arm around Palombi and said "Yeah, this is a good day."

To top it all off, Capt. Joe Ruffennach printed out a certificate that was presented to Hunter promoting him from probation to a full-fledged honorary member of the department.

"He didn't want to leave," Palombi said. And the guys at Midway have since heard that Hunter is still talking about his visit to Georgetown County.

"What we do in the fire service, it's not just about saving lives, but the lives we come together to touch," Ruffennach said. "This is a perfect example of that. If we can make this kid happy and see his face light up, it makes our day better too. It's a privilege to be a role model and we take that seriously. Hunter won't ever be able to be a firefighter because of his condition, but if we make him feel good about himself, there's no telling what he can aspire to."

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