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# Eight-year-old cancer survivor lives his firefighter dream

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10:00 PM PST on Sunday, November 8, 2009

By LINDA LOU

Special to The Press-Enterprise

When Erick Romero, 8, removed the blindfold from his eyes he couldn't believe what he saw: a row of shiny red fire trucks and firefighters waiting to meet him. He was speechless.

Erick, who was diagnosed with brain cancer as a toddler, dreams of becoming a fireman one day. His cancer is in remission but he has limited use of the right side of his body as a result of treatment.

On Thursday, Erick, who lives in Riverside, was able to suit up in full firefighting gear and go on a ridealong with a Redlands Fire Department crew. He also ate lunch with his heroes and became an honorary member.

Story continues below



**The Childhood Cancer Foundation / Special to The Press-Enterprise**

Riverside resident Erick Romero, 8, got to visit with members of the Redlands Fire Department on Thursday, thanks to The Childhood Cancer Foundation of Southern California. Erick's cancer is in remission and he dreams of becoming a fireman one day.

He hardly said anything in front of the firefighters but said later that the visit was "the best thing" ever, said Erick's mother, Yvette Romero.

The visit was a total surprise for Erick, who had no idea what was in store for him.

When Erick recently visited the Childhood Cancer Foundation of Southern California in Loma Linda, he casually told executive director Armida Kersey that his friend at school said he couldn't be a fireman. She didn't like

what she heard.

"What caught my attention is that he was told by his friend that he can't become a firefighter," Kersey said. "I thought, 'We don't ever want our kids to be told that they can't do something.' He just really touched me and he was really sincere about wanting to become a fireman."

What Erick told her stayed on her mind. Kersey called Redlands Fire Department Capt. Mike Howard for help even though her nonprofit foundation typically does not set up these kinds of visits. The Childhood Cancer Foundation mostly runs support groups, holiday events and activities for about 700 children and their families.

Erick, who attends Mountain View Elementary School, said his reason for wanting to be a fireman is simple.

"Firefighters save people," he said. "They get the people inside the house."

Yvette Romero said the visit was priceless.

"They went out of their way for him," she said. "It was his happiest day. I know I'll hear about it every day for at least two weeks."

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