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Pumpkin party

By JOY JUEDES, Staff Writer

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REDLANDS - Every fall, the Childhood Cancer Foundation of Southern California invites children with cancer and their families to the Live Oak Canyon Christmas Tree Farm's pumpkin patch for their Pumpkin Patch Party.

They also invite children who had cancer.

"We put all these families together and give them hope," said executive director Armida Kersey.

"They see other kids who made it, they're older and it's hope your kids will move on. It takes away a lot of fear."

The Childhood Cancer Foundation and the farm give children and their families free rein for two hours, giving out costumes, pumpkins and other Halloween decorations and sweets. Children get free hay and pony rides, a visit to the petting zoo, and can play in bounce houses and a hay castle.



Max Delgado, 4, of San Bernardino looks at the photo of himself taken by Armida Kersey, executive director of the Childhood Cancer Foundation of Southern California, at the organization's annual Pumpkin Patch Party at Live Oak Canyon Christmas Tree Farm in Redlands Saturday. - (Joy Juedes)

"I bring my kids because they enjoy it and we appreciate the people who make this possible," said Bernardin Saucedo of San Bernardino. He

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and his wife Marlene have two children who have fought leukemia - Juan, 12, and Sugeyns, 4.

"It's important for the kids," Bernardin said.

Some children who attended had finished treatment, and their parents said they were back in school.

"She's doing good - she's in second grade now," said Crystina Justice of her daughter Faith, 6< MD+,%30,%55,%70>1/<MD-,%0,%55,%70>2, who had a tumor. She pointed out her daughter's long hair.

She said the Childhood Cancer Foundation approached her family when Faith was in the hospital. The Justices have three other children - Liberty, 8, Hope, 3, and Love, 1 - and live in Palm Springs.

"They've helped us out tremendously," said Faith's father Jimi Justice.

They attend many of the foundation's events and said the Pumpkin Patch Party is one of their favorites.

Gregg Palmer, owner of Live Oak Canyon Christmas Tree Farm, said he wants the attention to be on the children and the organization, which has held the event for 11 years.

Kersey said the foundation expected more than 200 children and over 100 adults to attend this event.

The next events are Lighting the Way 10K-5K-1K Run/Walk Nov. 22, hosted by the Redlands Fire Department, and the annual Christmas party Dec. 6.

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