

**For Immediate Release**

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## Festival of Children Kicks Off at South Coast Plaza During National Child Awareness Month

Festival of Children Foundation Opening Night Party Marks the Start of the 20th Annual Festival of Children and Celebrates Local Children's Charities

COSTA MESA, Calif. (September 1, 2021) – 300 non-profit, community and business leaders gathered at Ancillary Studios in the former Sears Automotive Center at South Coast Plaza to kick off the 20<sup>th</sup> annual Festival of Children. The event featured original pieces by world-renowned visual artist James Jean and rare hyper cars that paid homage to the building's automotive history. The evening event was highlighted by two awards presented by Sandy Segerstrom Daniels, founder & executive director, Festival of Children Foundation.

The Founder's Award was given to Kimberly Cripe, president and CEO of Children's Hospital of Orange County, for significant contributions in:

- Broadening and enriching the lives of children
- Raising public awareness of the needs of children
- Inspiring and leading community-wide collaborations with youth-serving organizations

The Foundation's annual FRED Award (For Really Extraordinary "Do"ers) was presented to Sebastian Perez, a 12-year old born with Osteogenesis Imperfecta, or brittle bone disease. Sebastian has endured more than 95 broken bones and undergone numerous surgeries, yet he has dedicated most of his life to helping other kids in need. At age 8, Sebastian began bringing together his love of cars and helping others by organizing exotic car rallies that have since raised several thousand dollars and toys for charity

"There are so many incredible charities, individuals and companies on the front lines trying to meet every need and remove every obstacle of our children," stated Sandy Segerstrom Daniels. "It's an honor to celebrate them with this event and I couldn't imagine kicking off the 20<sup>th</sup> Festival of Children any other way."

Other notable guests included the Honorable Lou Correa, representatives from the office of the Honorable Michelle Steel, and Orange County Supervisor Katrina Foley who presented proclamations

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marking the contributions Festival of Children Foundation and Children's Hospital of Orange County have made in the community. Mayor of Costa Mesa, Mr. John Stevens, presented a proclamation marking the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Festival of Children at South Coast Plaza.

#### About National Child Awareness Month

The effort to have September declared as National Child Awareness Month began as a local effort in Orange County, Calif., by Festival of Children Foundation Founder Sandy Segerstrom Daniels to raise awareness and focus America's attention on our greatest asset – our children. The Orange County Board of Supervisors first unanimously designated September as "Child Awareness Month" in September 2002. In September of 2003, the State of California commended Festival of Children Foundation's efforts and designated September as "Children Awareness Month." In 2008, the U.S. Senate passed U.S. Senate Resolution 644 designating September 2008 "National Child Awareness Month." Since then, Ms. Segerstrom Daniels and Festival of Children Foundation have been successful in having every successive September designated as "National Child Awareness Month."

#### About Festival of Children Foundation

Festival of Children Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that serves to bring together and coordinate the efforts of charities, companies and individuals who work to improve the lives of children. 100% of the administrative costs are covered by designated funding, allowing donations to go further in direct support of programs and services that improve the lives of children nationwide. For more information please visit [www.festivalofchildren.org](http://www.festivalofchildren.org).

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