



**LAKELAND**  
FIRE DEPARTMENT

**Media Release**

## **Local 4173**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **SUN 'n FUN and Lakeland's Firefighters Join Forces to Fight Muscular Dystrophy on April 8, 2016**

Lakeland, FL- For the first time ever, Lakeland's Firefighters are joining forces with SUN 'n FUN to raise funds in the fight against muscular disease (MD). Firefighters on behalf of the International Association of Firefighters (IAFF) Local Chapter 4173 have been given the opportunity to raise awareness about muscular disease, the work of the Muscular Dystrophy Association (MDA), and to Fill the Boot to generate funds for research and cures. They will do so this year at *the 2016 SUN 'n FUN International Fly-In and Expo* on April 8, 2016 at 1:00PM to 2:00PM. SUN 'n FUN is active in local charity support and this year they will expand their influence through Local 4173's efforts in helping MDA. In addition to the fundraising at the event, Firefighters and SUN 'n FUN will also be sponsoring three families affected by MD for a once in a lifetime opportunity just prior to the daily airshow on Friday during the event. Their presence will help those in attendance to learn more about how muscular disease impacts families.

"We are thrilled to join Lakeland's Firefighters and MDA in the fight to find a cure", said SUN 'n FUN President and CEO John "Lites" Leenhouts. "It's a real honor to be able to use our event to directly help those in need right here in Lakeland, and being able to enhance our already great relationship with Lakeland Firefighters is an added bonus. It's great work for a great cause with a great partner."

MDA Coordinator for the Local 4173, Driver Engineer Margaret Orozco shares "We are very excited to start a partnership with SUN 'n FUN and we value the support that they are giving us to continue our work in the Lakeland community and support our MDA families. We especially appreciate the opportunity to fundraise at the SUN 'n FUN Fly-In because every dollar raised by our group goes directly back to families in Lakeland affected by MDA." Orozco also adds "MDA does this through research for cures and provides lifesaving help for families impacted by Muscular Disease (MD). MDA also provides summer camps for children with MD, which we also support through volunteer efforts."

The efforts of the Local 4173 are supported by the Lakeland Fire Department (LFD). LFD Public Information Officer, Janel Vasallo says "These fundraisers and the thousands of dollars raised by Lakeland's firefighters are just another great example of how much the men and women of LFD do for their communities and how much they do, at and away from work, to help others."

Fundraising efforts like these are deeply valued by the Muscular Dystrophy Association. "For more than six decades fire fighters have stood on the front lines for MDA, striving to make a difference in the lives of those affected by muscle disease," said MDA Executive Director, Erin Authier. "Fire fighters do more for MDA and the families we serve than any other group. In the Lakeland area, they spend countless hours every year participating in Fill the Boot drives and at MDA Summer Camp. We're grateful for the support of these inspiring, selfless individuals who have made a profound impact on our families' health, wellbeing and quality of life."



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Funds raised through 2016 Lakeland Fill the Boot events build on decades of research progress, helping push science to its limits in the search for treatments and cures for muscular dystrophy, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) and other related life-threatening diseases that take away people's ability to walk, move, smile, talk and even breathe.

Dollars raised also help support MDA's life-enhancing programs such as state-of-the-art support groups and clinics, including the MDA Clinic at St. Joseph's Children's Hospital of Tampa and St. Anthony's Neurology in St. Petersburg. They also make MDA summer camp possible so kids with muscle disease can enjoy "the best week of the year" at Rotary Camp of Florida in Brandon and nearly 80 other locations nationwide.

It's clear to see why those in attendance of SUN 'n FUN should lend their support to this worthy cause.

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