



## Pacific National Exhibition

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**NEWS RELEASE**

### **THANKS BRITISH COLUMBIA! CARING B.C. RESIDENTS STEP UP TO HELP MANITOBA BOY**

**VANCOUVER, B.C.:** The Pacific National Exhibition (PNE) wants to thank the hundreds of people who sent cards and stuffed animals after the Corporation put out a call to try and locate a small stuffed pig like the one lost by a young Manitoba boy fighting cancer.

*"We are overwhelmed by the response," says PNE President and CEO Michael McDaniel. "We knew that people in this province are incredibly caring, but we could not have imagined how this story would touch people."*

The PNE put out the province-wide call last week after a call from a family friend of 12-year-old Oliver Friesen of Kleefeld, Manitoba. Young Oliver came to the PNE in 2002 during a family trip to Vancouver. Enjoying a day at the annual PNE Fair, Oliver won a small stuffed pig while playing the Balloon Game. The first thing Oliver ever won, "fat little pig," as he called it, became a prized possession and a good luck symbol throughout his battle with cancer. During a recent treatment session Oliver's pig was lost when it was mistakenly thrown out by hospital cleaning staff. Unfortunately, the PNE stopped giving out the small pigs as prizes in 2003, when the manufacturer stopped making them. After contacting current and former staff of Playland in an attempt to locate another pig, the PNE reached out across the province to try and find another of the estimated 3000 "fat little pigs" that had been given out as prizes between 2001 and 2003.

From 2002 until early 2006 Oliver battled lymphoma, undergoing a series of painful treatments including a bone marrow transplant. Although his cancer is now in remission, Oliver was diagnosed in January with leuko-encephalopathy, a complication from the chemotherapy and radiation used to fight his cancer. Although leuko-encephalopathy is a fatal disease, Oliver and his family continue to hope for a miracle, and Oliver's dad says the outpouring of support by British Columbians has been a source of great joy for his son.

*"This is so exciting for us. It's so wonderful to see him smile again," says Brian Friesen. "We've been in absolute awe and astonishment at the magnificent response to your efforts. We feel truly fortunate to have your help."*

Hundreds of B.C. residents contacted the PNE, many dropping off stuffed animals, cards and well wishes for Oliver. On Wednesday, May 3<sup>rd</sup> PNE President Michael McDaniel traveled to Manitoba to deliver the first box of stuffed animals to Oliver.

*"I think the most special aspect of the donations is all the stories that accompanied each animal; people didn't just donate a toy, they donated items with very special meaning to them. We had many children come and donate their favourite stuffed animal because they wanted to help," says McDaniel.*

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The PNE was able to locate three of the exact pigs that Oliver lost, and those pigs, along with a huge box of other stuffed pigs and animals, were part of the package delivered to Oliver. The PNE plans on sending the remaining stuffed animals to Oliver within the next week.

*"We applaud your caring and want to thank the PNE for their generosity,"* says Oliver's dad Brian Friesen.

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Owned by the City of Vancouver, the Pacific National Exhibition (PNE) is a healthy and vibrant non-profit charity organization dedicated to providing over 3 million visitors a year with first-class cultural, sporting and family entertainment events. Founded in 1910, the PNE operates from a 114-acre site at Hastings Park, a multi-facility venue in Vancouver where the organization operates four business streams: an annual 17-day Fair, Playland Amusement Park, maintenance and care of the Hastings Park site and management of the site's year-round facilities. These facilities are utilized to celebrate a variety of hockey, amateur sporting, music, community, social, cultural and commercial events throughout the year.

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