

## Making a dream come true



Firefighter/Paramedic Jim Gorseline shows Erick Romero, 8, how to use a fire hose Thursday. **JESSE B. GILL/Redlands Daily Facts**

# Firefighter for a day

By **JESSE B. GILL**  
Staff Writer

When Yvette Romero removed the blindfold from her 8-year-old son's face, his eyes lit up. Before him was a garage full of Redlands firefighters ready to help him realize his dream.

In 2003, doctors diagnosed Erick Romero with astrocytoma at age 1. The disease, a form of brain cancer, has left Erick with partial paralysis.

When Erick told a friend at school about his dream of becoming a firefighter, the friend told him that dream would never come true.

"(The friend) told Erick he could never become a firefighter because of his paralysis," said Armida Kersey executive director for Candlelighters Child-

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**Capt. Mike Howard**  
Redlands Fire Dept.

hood Cancer Foundation, a nonprofit organization that supports families of children with cancer. Erick's mother, Yvette, said the friend's comment dampened her little boy's spirit and hopes for the future.

"It kept with him," she said. "It sticks in his mind."

When Kersey caught wind of Erick's story, she passed it on to Redlands Fire Capt. Mike Howard.

"I thought, 'This isn't right,'" she said.

Howard and a group of firefighters working the day shift at Station 261 on Citrus Avenue Thursday opened the station doors to Erick and made him an honorary firefighter.

"I was heartbroken when I heard his story," Howard said. "To me, he has enough to deal with and he should be able to live any kind of dream he wants to. The first thing that came to my head was let's make him a fireman."

Erick's parents drove him from their Riverside home to Station 261 wearing the blindfold. Firefighters greeted Erick

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