



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CHUKCHANSI COMBATS CENTRAL VALLEY'S FENTANYL CRISIS WITH SPONSORSHIP OF SPECIALIZED NARCOTIC K-9 TEAM FOR FRESNO POLICE DEPARTMENT

Chukchansi Cares Donates \$36,000 to Fresno Police Chief's Foundation to Bring Two Fentanyl-Detection K-9s to Central Valley

COARSEGOLD, CA – March 2, 2023 – Chukchansi Gold Resort & Casino has donated \$36,000 to the Fresno Police Chief's Foundation to launch a specialized narcotic K-9 team to address Central Valley's escalating fentanyl epidemic. Two K-9s trained specifically in fentanyl detection will join the fight against the deadly drug that claims thousands of lives each year.

A Picayune Rancheria of Chukchansi Indians Tribal Youth member presented this idea to the Chukchansi Economic Development Authority board. The effort was unanimously approved by the board to be funded through Chukchansi's philanthropic program - Chukchansi Cares.

The news was announced last night at a private event for law enforcement officials, including Fresno Police Chief Paco Balderrama and Fresno County District Attorney Lisa Smittcamp, amongst others. The new K-9 unit will offer significant support to the Fentanyl Overdose Resolution Team (FORT), which includes the Fresno Police Department, Clovis Police Department, Drug Enforcement Administration, Homeland Security Investigations, Fresno County District Attorney's Office, United States Attorney's Office and the Fresno County Sheriff's Department. FORT's mission is to build cases to arrest fentanyl dealers and educate the public on the dangers of fentanyl.

For photographs of the check presentation, [click here](#).

When they join the force, the new K-9s – to be named Teyish and Jawwan (meaning *Chief* and *Strength* in Chukchansi, respectively) – will be the Fresno Police Department's first dogs with the ability to detect fentanyl. This will offer significant support to finding and seizing fentanyl as it is frequently concealed in hiding spaces. The K-9s can search an area and detect fentanyl more quickly and efficiently than humans by following its scent, even when hidden.

"We're incredibly proud to support the Fresno Police Department in its fight against this deadly drug," said Janet K. Bill, Chairperson for the Picayune Rancheria of the Chukchansi Indians. "Fentanyl use has devastating consequences and has claimed too many lives in the Central Valley and across the country. Our goal is to eradicate fentanyl in our community."

Paco Balderrama, Fresno Police Chief, said, "As law enforcement and state and federal prosecutors continue to combat the devastating effects of fentanyl, we appreciate the partnership of Chukchansi Gold Resort & Casino in this fight. Their donation of \$36,000 to The Fresno Police Chief's Foundation will be used to purchase and train two fentanyl-detection K9s. The fentanyl epidemic is the biggest risk to our young people today as drug overdoses kill more people each year than homicides and traffic fatalities combined. This investment will save lives, help us take fentanyl off the streets and keep police officers safe."

Fentanyl's Impact on Central Valley and Native Americans:

- In 2021, the Fentanyl Overdose Resolution Team (FORT) responded to over 80 overdoses in the Central Valley, resulting in 34 deaths. In 2022, FORT responded to 59 overdoses in the Central Valley, resulting in 25 deaths. The majority of these overdoses involve kids aged 16 to 23 years old.
- In 2022, there were two major seizures in the Central Valley totaling over 450,000 fentanyl pills.
- Native Americans have been significantly impacted by the fentanyl epidemic. In 2020, the Centers for Disease and Control (CDC) [reported](#) overdose death rates for American Indian and Alaska Natives increased 39 percent compared with 2019.
- According to [CNN](#), synthetic opioids, including fentanyl, were involved in more than two-thirds of overdose deaths in the year ending March 2022. Deaths involving synthetic opioids increased by a staggering 80% over the past two years, CDC data shows.
- The fentanyl crisis is wreaking havoc on reservations. According to [Khn.org](#), the Blackfeet Nation suffered four deaths from fentanyl overdoses on the reservation in March 2022 alone, with additional 13 people surviving overdoses - a staggering number for an Indigenous population of 10,000 people.
- Overdoses are now the leading cause of preventable death among people ages 18 to 45, ahead of suicide, traffic accidents and gun violence, according to [federal data](#).

Known for its ongoing community support, Chukchansi Gold's Chukchansi Cares program donates thousands of dollars to local nonprofit organizations every year, in total giving over \$20 million in charitable dollars toward community benefit programs and initiatives.

About Chukchansi Gold Resort & Casino:

Nestled near the majestic Yosemite National Park, Chukchansi Gold Resort & Casino brings the beauty of the Sierra foothills into a world-class destination resort with fine dining, heart-pounding entertainment and premier gaming. Celebrating its 20th anniversary in 2023, Chukchansi Gold Resort and Casino has been voted No. 1 for 15 years as Best Casino by the Fresno Bee People's Choice Awards, sees over 130,000 monthly guests and employs over 1,100 individuals – disbursing roughly \$50 million in payroll and benefits into the local economy every year. Guests can enjoy its newly refurbished and remodeled hotel towers with 402 luxury rooms, indoor/outdoor pool, Serenity Springs Spa, and the award-winning Vintage Steakhouse that further the casino's reputation of quality, luxury and hospitality. For more information about the hotel and casino, please call 1-866-794-6946 or visit [ChukchansiGold.com](#). Must be 21 years of age or older and have a valid government issued photo ID acceptable to management for any and all transactions.

For more information, contact info@chukchansigold.com.

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