



California Department of Developmental Services

# News Release

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **DDS JOINS GOVERNOR EDMUND G. BROWN JR. AND FIRST LADY ANNE GUST BROWN IN CELEBRATING THE 84<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL CAPITOL CHRISTMAS TREE LIGHTING**

*Nine-year-old Jeffrey "J.J." Paris of Sonora will light the tree*

**SACRAMENTO** -- The Department of Developmental Services (DDS) joins Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr. and First Lady Anne Gust Brown in celebrating the 84<sup>th</sup> Annual Capitol Christmas Tree Lighting on Wednesday, December 2, 2015. This will be the 33<sup>rd</sup> year that a child with an intellectual and/or developmental disability will participate in the tradition.

Jeffrey James "J.J." Paris (age 9) of Sonora, CA, was chosen by Valley Mountain Regional Center (VMRC) to help the Governor and First Lady light the tree and hang a special hand-made ornament. J.J. represents over 290,000 individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities who receive services and supports from the state developmental centers and 21 nonprofit regional centers.

"We congratulate J.J. Paris for being selected to help the Governor and First Lady light this year's Christmas tree," said Santi J. Rogers, Director of DDS. "J.J. is a terrific young boy who is very active in and out of school, including Cub Scouts, Kung Fu, golf, First Tee, 4-H and the school band. And, most importantly, he and his great family are also very active in the community."

J.J. was born in Modesto, CA, to parents Jeff and Maren. His siblings are Sonny (sister, age 13) and Austin (brother, age 7). J.J. was diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) at age two and with Tourette syndrome this year, yet has persevered with humor and tenacity. When J.J. began showing signs of ASD, he was referred to VMRC for evaluation and assessment, and was formally diagnosed with ASD and received Early Start services.

J.J. loves going to school at Curtis Creek Elementary School in Sonora where he is a fourth-grader in Ms. Liz Burr's classroom. He enjoys camping and kayaking with his family and playing video games. VMRC is one of 21 nonprofit regional centers that serve children through the Part C of Individuals with Disabilities Act, known as Early Start, and offers both children and adults comprehensive, person-centered services and supports.

The Christmas tree is decorated with 10,000 ultra-low wattage LED lights and 900 ornaments created by persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities who receive services from state developmental centers and regional centers. For more information, please visit [www.dds.ca.gov](http://www.dds.ca.gov), or contact Nancy Lungren, Assistant Director of Communications at DDS, 916-616-8265 (cell) or 916-654-1820, or [nancy.lungren@dds.ca.gov](mailto:nancy.lungren@dds.ca.gov).

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