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## **First Annual Fire Truck Pull Raises \$23,000 for Local Students with Autism**

Palm Beach Gardens, Fla., Sept. 5, 2023 – The 2023 Fire Truck Pull took place on Saturday, Sept. 2, 2023, at Gardens Park, bringing together teams from across Palm Beach County for an exciting competition and a great cause. The event aimed to test the strength and determination of participants, while also raising funds for local students with autism who attend Connections, a nonprofit school in West Palm Beach.

With the community rallying together, this first annual event raised an impressive \$23,000 for Connections. It also fostered a powerful sense of camaraderie among the participating teams, including groups from local fire departments, police, gyms, businesses, and even a team of students from Connections.

“We’re beyond grateful for the enthusiastic support of the 2023 Fire Truck Pull,” says Debra Johnson, principal and executive director of Connections. “This event was not only a fun and challenging way to demonstrate strength, but also a meaningful opportunity to show support for the Connections community. Our students were thrilled to be part of the team and to see so many people cheering them on.”

The Fire Truck Pull showcased the true spirit of unity and generosity as teams pushed themselves to the limit, pulling a fire truck a distance of 30 feet in the quickest time possible.

The Palm Beach Gardens Police Department emerged as the champions in the Fastest Pull category, completing the challenge with an impressive time of just 11 seconds. In a second category—Lowest Combined Weight Pull—the Palm Beach Gardens Fire Rescue team took top honors by pulling the fire truck 30 feet within the three-minute time limit with team members only weighing a combined 772 pounds.

In addition to the athletic competition, the Fire Truck Pull celebrated the spirit of philanthropy by recognizing the teams and individuals who raised the highest amount of funds for Connections. The Z Squad, a team composed of young adults with autism who attend Connections’ Adult Program, emerged as the Highest Fundraising Team. One of their team members, Zach Edenzon, won top honors as the Highest Fundraising Individual.

The success of the 2023 Fire Truck Pull is a testament to the incredible support and generosity of the community across the Palm Beaches. The event showcased the strength of participants and highlighted the need to ensure that quality services are accessible to local students and young adults with autism.

Connections is grateful to the event sponsors: Presenting Sponsor—CTA Media, Signature Sponsor—the Palm Beach County Sheriff’s Foundation, Refreshment Sponsor—Wawa and DJ Services Sponsor—Digital Vibez. This event also would not have been possible without the generous support of the Palm Beach Gardens Fire Rescue and Palm Beach Gardens Parks and Recreation.

To learn more about this event, visit [connectedpb.com/fire-truck-pull](https://connectedpb.com/fire-truck-pull).

**About Connections:**

Connections is a nonprofit educational center that delivers high-quality, specialized instruction to students with autism in Palm Beach County. They serve students ages 3-22 years and offer an innovative program for young adults with autism. Learn more at [connectedpb.com](https://connectedpb.com).

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Downloadable event images available at: [www.connectedpb.com/press](https://www.connectedpb.com/press)



The Palm Beach Gardens Police Department team took top honors at the 2023 Fire Truck Pull.



(left to right) Event Chairperson Marc Edenzon, Palm Beach Gardens Deputy Fire Chief James Ippolito, Connections Director of Operations Jason Portman



A team from Fit & Psyched Personal Training competed in the 2023 Fire Truck Pull.



2023 Fire Truck Pull Champions: Palm Beach Gardens Police Department won the Fastest Pull category, Palm Beach Gardens Fire Rescue won the Lowest Combined Weight Pull category.