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That's not a fire; It's a fundraiser

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Don't be alarmed by the sirens and red lights, the parade of fire engines cruising through Sonoma and Marin counties today is part of a fund-raiser for children injured in fires.

The annual day-long relay benefits the Alisa Ann Ruch Burn Foundation, a non-profit organization founded in memory of an 8-year-old Southern California girl who died in a backyard barbecue accident in 1971.

It started shortly after 8 a.m. today in Healdsburg, with two dozen fire engines heading down back roads to Windsor, Santa Rosa, Cotati and Rohnert Park.

The parade, in which engines from two dozen fire districts will be dropping in and out during the day, will end in Marin County on Friday evening.

Rohnert Park Public Safety Sgt. John Marty said the annual event raises about \$40,000 and funds summer camps for badly burned children.

"This foundation teaches fire education, and sets itself apart by the camps it runs in the summer," Marty said. "These kids have a hard time, they are disfigured from scalding or fire burns. At these camps, they can get away for a week or two, forget everything else and be with kids just like themselves."

It is a topic that touches the hearts of firefighters, many of whom have suffered burns themselves.

"The kids will come out and ride in the lead car," Marty said. "We have gotten to know quite a lot of them."

The Northern California Relay is part of a broader statewide effort, which next moves to San Mateo County.

As the parade proceeds southward, it stops at fire stations and the Santa Rosa Fire Training Tower on West College Avenue collecting money that has been raised by



Jeff Kan Lee / The Press Democrat
The Alisa Ann Ruch Burn Foundation North Bay Relay started at the Healdsburg fire station and is winding its way south, making stops in Sonoma and Marin County fire stations to collect funds.

different fire agencies.

Engines from fire departments will join the relay as it continues into Rohnert Park and the through the rest of Sonoma County, then into Marin County, terminating in Sausalito at around 5:15 p.m.
