

Michael Brown

Childhood dream achieved



Michael Brown realized a childhood dream when he signed on to fight wildfires.

"He told me he saw guys fight a fire behind his house when he was 12, and that he's wanted to be one of those guys ever since," said Jesse Wright, a friend who works with Brown at Grayback Forestry.

Michael Brown arrived at the hospital at about 4 a.m. Wednesday. Brown suffered from facial burns and fractured facial bones.

On Thursday, he was released from intensive care and in "good condition." He was sitting up, watching TV and eating as of Friday, said Carole Gan, spokeswoman for the U.C.-Davis Health Systems. Brown is expected to be released soon, Gan said.

While still in high school, Brown started volunteering for the Rogue River Fire Department, said Mary Turnham, the mother of Brown's best friend.

After he graduated from Rogue River High School in 2006, he took a couple of jobs at local stores, where he met Wright.

When Wright told him about his work at Grayback, Brown jumped at the chance to get to the fire line.

"He really enjoys it," Wright said. "He's going to do it for the rest of his life."

The two became fast friends through the hard work.

"We were on a squad together for the last tour before this one," Wright said.

"Michael was a motivation for me and the other guys on that job. He would always say, 'I want to work; I don't want to be lazy.'"

Brown, 20, brings the same energy as he fixes up vintage cars to show quality, Turnham said. His latest project was a 1972 El Camino.

"I called him in the hospital and he said he doesn't care about whatever money he might get for this accident," Wright said. "He's going to go back."

-- *Jacques Von Lunen*