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### Perris Festival Celebrates Diverse Cultures

The City of Perris' annual multicultural festival drew local, regional, state, national and international dignitaries to celebrate the many communities that make Perris a culturally rich and diverse place to live, work and play.

The guests had one thing in common.

No matter where they arrived from, they were effusive in their praise for the City's commitment to diversity, its welcoming acceptance of immigrants and its ability to weave a fabric of a fabric of multicultural communities into a thriving City.



U.S. Rep Mark Takano, State Sen. Richard Roth and Perris Mayor Daryl Busch joined dignitaries on the stage to welcome visitors to the City's annual multicultural festival.

"The City of Perris represents the very best ideals of America," said U.S. Rep Mark Takano, D-Riverside, who represents Perris in Washington D.C. "It is important to celebrate our immigrant population, who come to this country and work so hard and thank them for making the U.S. such a great and diverse nation.

"I want to particularly thank the City of Perris for supporting this event," Takano added. "Perris lives up to the best ideals of our country. I'm proud to represent Perris in Congress."

Other speakers at the Sept. 27 festival voiced similar sentiments. The VIP-list included Irene Munoz, an administrator at the Guatemalan Consulate in San Bernardino; Hugo Olivas, Deputy Consul for the Mexican Consulate in San Bernardino and Teodoro Galvez, who represented the State of Michoacan, home of Cotija De La Paz, Perris' sister city.



Perris Mayor Pro-Tem Tonya Burke (center) waves to the crowd while City Councilwoman Rita Rogers and City Councilman David Starr Rabb join the applause during the Sept. 27 multicultural festival.

The dignitaries also included State Sen. Richard Roth, D-Riverside, who was joined by Perris Mayor Daryl Busch, Mayor Pro-Tem Tonya Burke, City Councilmembers David Starr Rabb and Rita Rogers and Perris Police Chief Mike Judge.

In addition, representatives from the offices of Assemblyman Jose Medina and Riverside County Supervisor Marion Ashley attended.

The 2015 festival coincides with the 31st anniversary of the Perris-based group TODEC (*Training Occupational Development Educating Communities*) Legal Center, which advocates for immigrants and helps bring them into the mainstream of American life through education, employment and citizenship classes. TODEC founders Luz Maria and Antonio Ayala were presented with awards for their work with immigrants.

Roth said he was "in awe" of the Ayalas for their commitment to "proving pathways for immigrants." He said he was impressed by the turnout at this year's festival, estimated to be about 2,000.

"There was a sea of people who were happy and energized," Roth said. "It says a lot about what the City of Perris has done for its residents. The City is a wonderful community—it's a gem of western Riverside County."



"Charros" dressed in colorful outfits joined an open-air Mass during the multicultural festival in the City of Perris.

The day's celebration began with a bilingual open-air Mass attended by about 700 worshippers.

The service was highlighted with the appearance of about 30 "charros," Mexican cowboys who rode on their horses in a procession before and afterwards. Adding to the pageantry was the appearance of dancers dressed in the costumes of indigenous people from Central America. Worshippers carried with them images of the Virgin of Guadalupe, patron saint of the Americas. Others brought with them a model of a basilica brought with them from Michoacan. The day's activities also included musical and dance performances by an assortment of artists.

Mayor Busch and his council colleagues welcomed the crowds to the City and said the City remains committed to helping its residents achieve the American Dream.

"This event brings our community together," Busch said. "Our multicultural festival is a great way to get everyone to participate in our community and we think that's a great idea. I'm glad to see everyone here and I hope everyone has a great day. Congratulations to TODEC for working for 31 years on behalf of our residents. We wish you another 31 years doing what you are doing for our community."



Worshippers carrying an image of the Virgin of Guadalupe to an open-air Mass at Foss Field Park, part of the City of Perris' multicultural celebration on Sept. 27.

Mayor Pro-Tem Burke called the multicultural festival "a great event." She praised TODEC for organizing the festival and for holding classes to help immigrants navigate through the process of becoming citizens and for encouraging them to improve their education, language skills and employment prospects.

"This is important because our residents get to see how we embrace our culture and our diversity," Burke said. "That makes for a better community."

Burke also judged a student-art contest in which youngsters were asked to interview their parents and grandparents about their memories from growing up outside the U.S. and then draw pictures based upon those recollections. More than 200 entries were submitted.



Dressed in traditional garb, dancers perform on stage during the City of Perris multicultural festival Sept. 27.

Rabb called the festival "very impressive and very exciting."

"This shows our community is united and working together to make a better Perris," he said. "That makes me proud and excited that we are able to facilitate that."

Rogers congratulated TODEC and the Ayala family for their continuing support of immigrant families and "for continuing this great tradition in the City of Perris."

"There's great entertainment, great food and great fun," Rogers said. "This festival has become a tradition in Perris. Traditions in any community are wonderful to maintain. This is a wonderful tradition to maintain."



Perris Mayor Pro-Tem Tonya Burke holds the winning entry in an art contest that drew entries from more than 200 students, part of the City's annual multicultural festival.

Luz Gallegos, daughter of Luz and Antonio Ayala, said the multicultural festival has expanded in recent years to include representation not only from Michoacan and other Mexican states but countries like Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Columbia, Vietnam and the Philippines. Gallegos serves as director of the immigrant services at TODEC.

"September is Hispanic Heritage Month," Gallegos said. "We want to thank the City of Perris for allowing us the use of its campus to put on this festival. It's very important. We not only celebrate our culture, but education, and our heritage. I feel very blessed today."

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