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Biggest Loser Signup Exceeds Expectations

Perris officials were delighted when 187 residents entered the City's version of the "biggest loser" competition last year.

When they announced the continuation of the 2014 version of biggest loser as part of the Live Well Perris healthy eating active living initiative, they hoped that 200 or 250 people would sign up. Instead, 602 residents enrolled.

Perris Records Clerk Judy Haughney and Assistant Finance Director Jennifer Erwin are coordinating the biggest loser effort in 2014 while IT Manager Arturo Cervantes is coordinating a series of winter workouts aimed at getting folks to shed weight.

All are delighted with the turnout.

"The numbers far exceeded our wildest expectations," Haughney said. "We are providing opportunities for people to get into shape and I am elated that people have made the choice to make themselves healthier. People are realizing that being healthy is an important component of their lives."

Erwin said she is most pleased that children are accompanying their parents to the workouts and learning the importance of fitness at an early age.

The City of Perris' health initiative is working," Erwin said. "The response has been absolutely amazing."

Cervantes attends every Saturday morning workout. "Perris residents are interested and committed about taking their health seriously," he said. "The City of Perris is committed to spreading the word about the importance of healthy eating, active-living and the importance of taking control of your health!"

The latest winter workout, held Jan. 25 at Mercado Park, drew 152 participants, including many already entered in the biggest loser contest. Most walked to the park from nearby residences in groups ranging from one to a dozen. About 90 percent of the crowd wore their distinctive black Live Well Perris t-shirts.



Perris City Councilman Mark Yarbrough takes part in the Jan. 25 workout at Mercado Park.

Personal trainer Jerry Green put them through a series of stretches, crunches, short runs, jumps, pushups and other calorie-burning exercises.

The audience included City Councilman Mark Yarbrough, a winter workouts regular.

"It's great to see this program rise to the next level," he said. "Our biggest loser program—and indeed the Live Well Perris program—was hugely successful last year and it is going into the stratosphere in 2014. People in Perris have discovered how important it is to be healthy. We've developed a program that makes it fun, convenient and free to get healthy."

Theresa Outlaw is taking losing weight seriously. She's lost 22 pounds since November, attends all winter workouts and takes advantage of a free pass to Bob Glass Gym to work out almost daily, where she hits the treadmill and takes part in aerobics classes. She attributes the workouts, along with a change in diet, to lowering her blood pressure and cholesterol levels. Pork is out. Chicken, broccoli, carrots and string beans are in.

Building up a sweat is part of the regimen too.

"I love working out here because of the positive atmosphere among all the participants," Outlaw said. "I feel I get a great workout and the people who are here are hard-working and want to see themselves improve. There are a lot of people in Perris who could benefit from this program—you can't beat it. You get a workout with a personal trainer for free!"

The biggest loser program culminates April 26 with a community health fair at City Hall. Interim weigh-ins take place Feb. 15 and March 15. The biggest loser winner takes home two tickets to Disneyland.



Stepping on and off a curb was part of the winter workout on Jan. 25. Dozens of residents wearing their distinctive "Live Well Perris" t-shirts, take part in the exercise.

City volunteer Robin Monette began participating in Live Well Perris workouts last year. She's dropped 27 pounds since then and says she feels great. Like other regulars, she said the City should be commended for its outreach to get people in shape.

"Perris is doing a fantastic job of getting people out of their homes and having them become more active," she said. "It's providing a big improvement in peoples' lives."

Wendy Martinez said she's noticed the improvement since she's been working out. Like so many other Saturday-morning regulars, Martinez joined Live Well Perris workouts last year and is continuing in 2014.

"I feel my legs are stronger," she said. "I'm so happy the City is doing this for the community. We are starting to become a healthier City."

Green, the trainer who leads the Mercado Park sessions, said Perris is setting the trend in community health initiatives. The winter workouts continue until April when Perris hosts a community health fair. Further exercise programs are being developed for the summer, fall and winter, right up until the end of the year.

Green, a longtime fitness trainer, works with several agencies throughout Riverside County. No one tops Perris, he said.

"Give yourself a pat on the back," Green said. "You are head-and-shoulders above everybody else in this region."



Gut-busting crunches were part of the winter workout at Mercado Park.

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