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Healthy Snacks Debut at Live Well Workout

The "healthy eating" portion of the City's Live Well Perris campaign took center stage earlier this month with demonstrations of healthy snacks at a local supermarket and during the weekly workouts at Mercado Park.

Since kicking off the Live Well Perris initiative in 2013, City officials have embarked on a two-pronged effort to promote healthier lifestyles.

To encourage active living, the City has created a series of exercise programs to encourage residents to get up and move, work up a sweat and lose calories. Currently, workouts take place on alternating Saturdays at Mercado and May Ranch parks.

Healthy eating has been encouraged through a community health fair, a Farmer's Market that provides fruits, vegetables and other low-calorie food choices and a public education programs in City schools. And more than 600 people signed up to take part in this year's version of the "Biggest Loser" weight-reduction competition.

Vendors who gather weekly to sell their wares at the Saturday morning Farmer's Market boast an assortment of oranges, grapefruit, honey, jams, herbal teas and coffee and vegetarian tacos and tostados.



Perris City Councilman Mark Yarbrough listens to City employee Michelle Ogawa explain the benefits of healthy-snacking during a recent demonstration at Rio Ranch Market in Perris.

The City's second annual Community Health Fair, set for April 26 at the City Hall Campus, 101 North D Street, will also feature healthy food choices from a variety of vendors. The health fair also marks the final weigh-in for Biggest Loser contestants.

Farmer Brian Gong said he sold all his produce twice in recent weeks. He commended the City of Perris for encouraging residents to exercise and eat right.

"Very few cities make an effort to combine exercise programming with healthy food alternatives," Gong said. "This is just a great outreach. It's clear that the City of Perris wants its residents to become healthier and is creating programs to make that happen."

Danny Echeverria cooked "veggie" fry bread and other food options that feature lettuce, tomatoes, salsa, and beans.

Echeverria said he travels throughout Riverside County at events like farmers' markets. He called the City's "Live Well Perris" initiative "the greatest thing I've seen in a long time" for getting folks to improve their health.



Perris City Councilman Mark Yarbrough snacks on wheat crackers, low-sodium corn and salsa prepared by City employees Lupe Acosta and Michelle Ogawa.

"It's one heckuva program," he said. "It's totally positive. I feel great just being here."

Kathy Medina, who offered herbal teas and coffees at her location, said the City has succeeded in getting the word out about its ongoing healthy-eating active-living initiative.

"Everyone is interested in looking good, losing weight and being healthy," she said.

While customers perused the offerings at the farmer's market, City staff members Michelle Ogawa and Lupe Acosta prepared healthy snacks at Rio Ranch Market. They blended low-sodium corn and medium hot sauce on wheat crackers for a low-cal tangy, tasty treat. The market provided the ingredients for the demonstration, which is part of the "Champions for Change" nutrition-education program the City is conducting with the Riverside County Department of Public Health. Customer response was enthusiastic, Ogawa said.

"We handed out a lot of samples and got a lot of very positive feedback," she said.

The City will be conducting other nutrition-outreach programs in the coming months.

Perris City Councilman Mark Yarbrough dropped by the farmer's market vendors and the demo at Rio Ranch. Yarbrough is a long-time supporter of Perris' Farmer's Market program and attends almost every Saturday morning workout.



The Perris Farmers Market attracts several growers who sell a wide variety of produce.

"We are growing the number of vendors at our Farmer's Market," he said. "They are selling healthy foods to people who are working out nearby. We are providing healthy-eating and active-living in the same place. How can you beat that?" And the Rio Ranch demonstration showed that tasty can mean healthy, Yarbrough said.

"Bad snacking is responsible for a lot of dietary health issues," he said. "The snacks provided at our Champions for Change demonstrates that snacks that are good for you can also taste good."

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