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Car Show Raises Cash for Operation Silver Star

When the non-profit needed money to support their good works, the City of Perris extended a helping hand.

The City, along with the March Joint Powers Authority, joined forces with Operation Silver Star volunteers to put on the second annual "Honor Our Heroes" car show at the former March Air Force Base as a fundraiser. More than 60 convertibles, coupes, muscle cars, pickups, motorcycles, a jet boat and other classic vehicles made the May 17 fundraiser a success. Prior to the car show, organizers staged a five-kilometer run.

"All-in-all it was a good time," said Richard De La Cruz, one of Operation Silver Star founders. "It a nice venue, people enjoyed it and they had a really nice time."

The City provided a stage for musical performances during the daylong event. Perris City Councilman served as one of the car show judges, transported visitors in a powered golf cart and worked security at the entrance. Richard de la Cruz and his wife, Delia, were delighted to receive the help.

"It's so important that elected representatives so their support," he said. "It makes us feel that people really care."



Perris City Councilman Mark Yarbrough (right) stands with Operation Silver Star founders Richard and Delia De La Cruz, who founded the veterans-support group after their son was seriously wounded in action in Iraq.

Yarbrough said he was happy to support the cause. He's the father of three children who have served in the military and his twins currently serve in the Army and Marines.

"I am so glad the City was able to participate and help this great group of volunteers," Yarbrough said. "We can never do enough for our veterans. Our freedoms come from the resolve of the people who have served and the many who have made the ultimate sacrifice. They defend freedom so others can enjoy freedom."

Richard De La Cruz and his wife, Delia, formed Operation Silver Star when their son, Army Pvt. Jesus "Jesse" De La Cruz, was seriously wounded six years ago when his patrol was hit by a rocket-propelled grenade while responding to a report of an improvised explosive device in Iraq. Jesse De La Cruz's left leg had to be amputated below the knee. He underwent several operations and remains in pain to this day. During his recovery, Richard and Delia De La Cruz met other veterans wounded in action. Many of those had difficulty paying bills because of delays in receiving their Veterans Administration benefits.



American flags unfurl in the breeze at the second annual "Honor Our Heroes" car show May 17.

Other veterans suffered from post traumatic stress disorder and difficulty finding work after leaving the service. Operation Silver Star helps as many as possible with the help of fundraisers like the car show.

Delia De La Cruz said every time she recounts what happened to her son, she relives the fear and horror of that first time the family was notified their son had been wounded in action on March 12, 2008. He left the service, got married and is the father of two children. He still has not found full-time employment. Part of the mission of Operation Silver Star, in addition to providing stipends for monthly expenses, is to take returning and wounded soldiers on fishing and camping trips and other recreational activities.

She said it is heartening to know the City of Perris and the March Joint Powers Authority—which was created to find new uses for former Air Force property that became available as a result of military downsizing—stepped up to lend support.

"I can't thank them enough," she said. "Their support was huge."



Lines of classic cars made a colorful day of viewing at the "Honor Our Heroes" car show.

Carey Allen, Administrative/Property Services Manager at the March Joint Powers Authority, called Operation Silver Star an "awesome organization" that the agency is pleased to support.

"We are very humbled about that they do," Allen said.

Richard Parker, who attended the car show with his 1963-and-half Ford Ranchero, said the event remind everyone of the price paid in blood, sweat and pain by members of the armed forces.

"We are here to show we care—period," Parker said. "We have to give back to those who served."

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