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Old Grove Farm Share Program Pilots at City Hall

The farm came to Perris City Hall—and a dozen health-conscious employees took advantage of a pilot program to grab some locally grown, organic fruits and vegetables.

Members of the Perris Employee Wellness Committee contacted the Old Grove Farm Share Program, which delivered the bounty of purple carrots, Mandarin and navel oranges, white, green and red romaine lettuce, Korean onions, strawberries, potatoes and beets. Healthy-eating plays a crucial role, along with active living, in the City's ongoing "Live Well Perris" program and the farm share program allows Perris employees to join the initiative without having to leave work.



Perris public works supervisor Arturo Garcia picks a bunch of Romaine lettuce as part of the Old Grove Farm Share Program.

"We are very excited about having this program available to our employees," said Jennifer Erwin, a member of the wellness committee. "Live Well Perris is a program that teaches healthy-eating options to our residents. The farm share program encourages our employees not just to teach the residents but to learn to be healthy themselves."

Riverside County officials, who are teaming up with the City to encourage healthy-eating in parents, grandparents and school children, gave Perris kudos for bringing the initiative to the worksite. Perris is the first City to do so in Riverside County.



Perris Assistant City Manager Ron Carr and Administrative Services Manager Isabel Carlos make their choices while Dan Bianchi provides details about the produce available for pickup.

"Living Well is about eating fresh, local and healthy," said Gayle Hoxter, Public Health Program Chief for the Riverside County Department of Public Health. "It's neat to get fresh and local produce where people work. This is about taking care of your staff. What better way to do so than to have local produce brought to work to take home to the family?"

Twelve Perris employees took part in the initial delivery. The City would like to see additional support in coming weeks. As part of the arrangement with Old Grove, participants can purchase a half-or full-share of available produce, making the program great for singles and couples as well as families.



Perris Administrative Services Manager Isabel Carlos shows off her basket of fresh, locally grown fruits and vegetables.

Municipal employees who took part in the first share program were treated to cooking tips from Dan Bianchi, a member of the Old Grove coop. He explained how the crops were planted and harvested, best-cooking practices and best ways to serve them. Bianchi emphasized that all the produce was grown locally in places like Temecula, the Perris Valley, Thermal and Chino.

Public Works Supervisor Arturo Garcia said he wants to make sure his family eats healthy. Taking part in the Old Grove program is a great way to introduce them to fresh, local produce.

"Eating healthy is important for families today and this helps provide great foods without having to leave work," he said.

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