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Perris Kids Commit to Healthy Living

City of Perris officials gave a public shout-out to nearly 100 elementary school students who completed a six-week course in healthy eating and active living that required them to exercise regularly and trade chips and soda for fruits and yogurt.

Perris Mayor Daryl Busch and several City administrators visited Railway Elementary School and Innovative Horizons Charter School to praise the first-through-eighth graders for their commitment to a healthier lifestyle. The City joined forces with the Perris Elementary School District and THINK (Teaching, Helping, Inspiring & Nurturing Kids) Together, a non-profit program that combines cities, schools and parents working to enrich the lives of children.

"We want to acknowledge your hard work," Busch said in remarks at Railway Elementary. "We want you to continue to do what you have done to be healthy. Exercising and eating healthy are the keys to living healthier and better lives."



Perris Mayor Daryl Busch shakes hands with Railway Elementary School student Emma Davis during a ceremony grader-schoolers for their commitment to eating healthy and exercising.

The Mayor shook the hands of every student who completed the six-week challenge and presented them with two passes to the recently-opened DropZone aquatics center. All the students have been invited to the July 8 City Council meeting where they will receive certificates from the City. Busch said the THINK program fits in nicely with the City's "Live Well Perris" health initiative, which encourages people of all ages to exercise and eat healthy. The City already has hosted a community health fair, its version of the "biggest loser" weight-loss competition, a hike at Lake Perris and a boxing clinic. Upcoming events include baseball, soccer and skateboard clinics, an aquatics and swimming-safety demonstration at the DropZone on July 11 and the Oct. 4 Tour de Perris bicycle ride.

"The habits of good health and healthy eating cannot be started too soon," Busch said. "We are facing a crisis with increasing numbers of children being affected by diabetes and obesity. Hopefully, this program will help to reverse that."



Joshua Oziengbe, a fifth-grader at Railway Elementary School receives congratulations from Perris Mayor Daryl Busch during a June 16 ceremony.

Erin Brinker, executive director of the Inland Empire Region of THINK Together, praised Perris officials for their willingness to encourage school kids to get and stay healthy. Brinker said the THINK Program extends from Sacramento to San Diego. But very few cities have "embraced us like the City of Perris," Brinker said.

"We're thrilled to be part of this partnership," she said. "It tells me that this City is committed to the health and well-being of its residents and is willing to work to make its community healthy. Healthy people make a healthy community."

The student honorees completed at least one hour of exercise five days a week during the six-week program, eat fish and whole grain breads, lean protein and fruits and vegetables while reducing sodas, chips and cookies.



Ifeatu Okafor, who attends Innovative Horizons Charter School in Perris, is all smiles as he greets Mayor Daryl Busch.

Innovative Horizons second-grader Jasmine Graciano, 6, said she learned that during classroom lessons that carrots can improve vision and that eating fruits and vegetables can help reduce sickness and lead to healthier skin. She likes bananas, apples, grapes and blueberries.

Schoolmate Ifeatu Okafor, 10, got to make and eat fruit kabobs under the direction of Chef Lee Burton, who worked with the City's "Chef in the Classroom" program that was part of THINK. He said he likes oranges, grapes and blueberries. Giving up chips is no problem.

"I don't like chips," Ifeatu said.

Railway fourth-grader Emma Davis, 10, said she's been playing soccer and handball for exercise and eating broccoli, cauliflower and carrots. She admitted trading chips for vegetables proved challenging at first.

"But now I like it," she said.

Joshua Oziengbe, 10, a fifth-grader, said exercise makes for a healthier body and a sharper brain. He likes to run and has added asparagus to his diet.

"When you eat healthy and exercise you get both stronger and smarter," Joshua said.

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