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Back-to-School Festivities at Perris Teen Center

The back-to-school barbecue, gaming tournament and school-supply giveaway held Aug. 7 at the Perris Teen Center was aimed at helping adolescents and teen-agers thrive this academic year while raising the profile of the after-class gathering spot.

On both accounts, the event proved a smashing success.

City staffers and members of the Youth Advisory Committee handed out 150 backpacks, pencils, paper and other classroom necessities to students between 11 and 17 years old. The day's activities also included giveaways to stores, restaurants and sporting venues, a tournament that included an Xbox One tournament featuring Madden (a video football game) and Just Dance and a barbecue lunch of hot dogs, hamburgers and snacks.



Youth Advisory Committee member Gabriella Bulacan, 15, shows off the recording studio at the Perris Teen Center. A back-to-school event drew 150 teen-agers who received free backpacks.

"This is a great event that exceeded our expectations," said Sabrina Chavez, the City's liaison to the YAC. "There are a lot of people in the City who are struggling to make ends meet and helping our students who live in Perris is the least we can do."

Chavez thanked sponsors Walmart and Jenny's Diner for their support. Members from the Youth Advisory Committee also were on hand to help run the back-to-school program.

Rancho Verde High School sophomore Gabriella Bulacan, 15, has taken part in several projects since her appointment to the YAC last year. The Youth Advisory Committee has organized a Valentine's Day Dance, taken part in an Earth Day community cleanup and is helping organize a skateboard tournament in September. Bulacan and several other YAC members took part in the back-to-school event. She said that joining the youth committee has increased her self-confidence and character.

"I used to be very shy and quiet," she said. "Now I know how to take charge of things."



Members of the Perris High School Dance Team strut their stuff at the back-to-school program at the Teen Center.

She's also learned that promoting any type of City-sponsored event takes a lot of pre-planning and behind-the-scenes attention to detail.

Several Perris staff members took time out to explain to visiting teens about the activities and entertainment available at the center. Those include a recording studio, computers, Xbox games, foosball and large-screen televisions. Plans are underway to add an after-school tutoring program.

Lance Ramsey, 11, is a regular at the center. He loves it.

"It's an awesome place to hang out," Lance said. "It's lots of fun."

Lance said he finishes his homework at the center, plays computer games and indulges in his favorite activity—foosball.



Taylor Baker, 17, and Rayah Davis, 16, show off the backpacks they received.

Angela Torres, 17, a Perris High School senior, said she likes to play the "Just Dance" game where contestants try out various moves. She said she likes to visit the Teen Center because she gets exercise and likes the way the staff treats her.

"I put a lot of energy into dancing—it's fun," she said. "The workers here are really nice and friendly."



Perris Teen Center staff member Jessica Munoz presents a backpack to Elijah Grayson, 12, who was one of 150 Perris students to take home a backpack.

Rayah Davis, 16, a Perris High School junior, said she appreciates the benefits of having a Teen Center in Perris. Rayah, a member of the high school dance team, took part in a performance before the backpack giveaway.

"I like to hang out with my friends here," she said. "The City of Perris is a very welcoming place. The Teen Center staff treats me good. They make me feel welcome."

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