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City Honored at League of California Cities Convention

The City of Perris took center stage in Los Angeles this week while claiming the prestigious Helen Putnam Award for its hugely successful Live Well Perris community health initiative.

Perris Mayor Daryl Busch led a contingent of City elected officials and administrators attending the annual League of California Cities convention. Busch was called to the front of the audience to accept the applause of hundreds of civic leaders from one end of California to the other.

This year's Helen Putnam Award is the City's third since 2008. The City's first Putnam Award came for installing solar panels at its City Hall Campus, which reduced carbon dioxide-creating fuels and greenhouse gas emissions. In 2012, the City won for its collaboration with several other agencies to bring a state-of-the-art sewer system to the disadvantaged community of Enchanted Heights, replacing 446-aging and leaking septic tanks.

The Putnam Award is presented to cities that have made unique contributions to community residents and businesses, contributions which have resulted in lower costs or more effective delivery of services. The award, created in 1982, is named in honor of a mother, school teacher, principal, mayor and Sonoma County supervisor.

Only two other cities in California have earned more Putnam Awards than Perris since 2008.



Perris Mayor Daryl Busch (far left) receives the acknowledgement of the audience during a ceremony announcing the winners of the Helen Putnam Award for creating the Live Well Perris healthy eating-active-living initiative. Jose Cisneros, president of the League of California Cities, reads a description of the Live Well Perris program while Mayor Busch and representatives from other communities listen.

"It is a real thrill to be here in Los Angeles to accept this award on behalf of our City," Busch said. "What's really special about this particular award is that it really belongs to the community. Perris residents have turned out in large numbers to take part in Live Well events. Without that support, the program would not have been nearly as successful."

Joining Busch at the League convention were Mayor Pro-Tem Rita Rogers, City Council members Al Landers, Julio Rodriguez and Mark Yarbrough, City Clerk Nancy Salazar, City Manager Richard Belmudez and Assistant City Manager Ron Carr. City staff members prepared a booth with photos, a video and brochures detailing the Live Well Perris campaign which drew many elected officials from throughout California.

Live Well Perris began in mid-2013 with a health fair that attracted nearly 2,000 people. Since then, the City organized and held another health fair, enrolled 800 people in the Live Well Perris version of the Biggest Loser, hosted dozens of weekend and evening aerobic workouts, conducted a series of walks and hikes and sports-skills clinics, initiated a chef-in-the-classroom program to teaching healthy food tips to kids and took part in the International Walk to School Day. Next Live Well event: A skateboard-skills clinic Sept. 20 at Paragon Park.



Perris City Councilman Mark Yarbrough (right) holds the Helen Putnam Award while visiting the City's booth at the Los Angeles Convention Center with Assistant Perris City Manager Ron Carr.

Mayor Pro-Tem Rita Rogers said the Putnam Award marks "an exciting time for Perris." She too praised the commitment of the thousands of Perris residents who are taking part in Live Well Perris events. She said she is proud to be part of a "pro-active City working together to achieve great things for Perris."

City Councilman Al Landers called the Putnam Award "a coveted honor" and thanked Perris employees and residents for making it an unqualified success.

"Live Well Perris has grown much bigger than we thought," Landers said. "This is what can happen when people come together for the health and well-being of the City."

Landers said Perris policy-makers never tire of accepting honors like the Putnam on behalf of the city.

"The excitement is not diminished one bit for our third Putnam," he said. "It's fun every time to receive awards."



Perris City Councilman Al Landers and Mayor Pro-Tem Rita Rogers dropped by the City's booth in Los Angeles, which attracted dozens of visitors from other California communities wanting information about the Live Well Perris healthy-eating active-living campaign.

Concord Mayor Tim Grayson was one of many visitors to stop by the Perris booth in the Los Angeles Convention Center, which highlighted major Live Well Perris activities. Grayson spoke to City Councilman Yarbrough who answered questions from elected officials.

Grayson could not say enough good things about Live Well Perris.

"It's incredibly inspiring," Grayson said. "It shows that Perris is concerned about its future. We need to save our future generation from the downward spiral that ends in diabetes, high-blood pressure and high cholesterol. We owe our children a better future."

Yarbrough agreed. He pointed out that several Perris residents told him their health has improved through better eating and exercising and that they no longer have to take medication for diabetes and other maladies.

"Who knows how many lives Live Well Perris will save over the years?" he said. "To get one Putnam Award is special—garnering three is unbelievable. This shows that we are in touch with our community and that we can make great things happen."

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