



Perris Press Release

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African-American Community Expo a Glorious Celebration

More than 1,000 people came to Foss Park on the Perris City Hall Campus to dance, paint, listen and learn about the contributions black Americans have made to the country, state and Perris Valley. The Feb. 16 event was the 12th annual Black History Community Expo, a celebration that drew local artists, churches, plenty of food vendors and families looking for a fun and educational way to spend the day.

Mother Nature smiles on the gathering, sending a brilliant sunny day and temperatures in the 80s for the large and enthusiastic crowd. Perris City Councilwoman Rita Rogers was among the local dignitaries who stopped by the Expo. Rogers addressed the crowd and thanked them for taking part in what she called a "glorious celebration of Perris' rich and diverse history."

"Give yourself a round of applause!" Rogers told the audience. "We are definitely a very diverse community that respects all cultures and supports each others' events. We get along great. I am pleased to see such a diverse crowd here today."

Later, Rogers autographed a mural created for the Expo by Perris artist Rob Padilla. She was one of dozens of residents and visitors who signed the artwork.

Dozens of youngsters took to the City stage to perform a variety of dances, including tap and hip-hop. Ryane Owens, 8, was among the youngest dancers, performing hip-hop numbers.

Ryane said she enjoys dancing because it's fun and builds self-esteem.

"When you dance in front of a group of people you get to express your feelings," Ryane said. "You don't have to worry if you did good or bad."

Emmett Reid, one of the Expo organizers, thanked the City of Perris for providing the venue at its support. Part of the program included recognizing several churches for their community involvement and providing health-care and employment information.

"It's a great event," Reid said. "We're trying to get people excited about dreaming and get them more involved in their community. It takes a team to make the dream. Perris is a great community."

Patricia and Carl Wiggins of Eagles Wings Community Outreach Center used the Expo to promote the after-school programs the church operates. The after-school program includes tutoring in math, social studies, arts and crafts projects and motivation, Patricia Wiggins said.

"Our goal is to empower kids and make them realize that they are responsible for their own success or failures," she said. Wiggins said the church also is working with the Riverside County Office of Mental Health to address mental-health concerns in the African-American community. She said more and more people are confronting depression and anger as a result of job losses and other stresses related to the long economic recession.

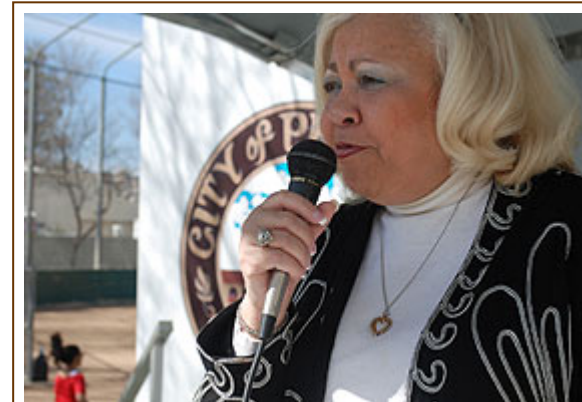
Janice Rosendahl dispensed details about the new organization she founded—the Life-to-Life Foundation. The group, still in its infancy, was created to work with abused and neglected people, the unemployed and those lacking adequate education to land decent-paying jobs.

Rosendahl said she was impressed at the community Expo because it connected people to resources.

"Perris takes care of its own," she said. "Perris is a City of doers."



Lizbeth Munoz, 9, a student at Val Verde Elementary School, performs a hip-hop dance routine during the City's Black History Community Expo Feb. 16 at Foss Park.



Perris City Councilwoman Rita Rogers addresses the crowd of 1,000 at the Black History Community Expo. "We are definitely a very diverse community that respects all cultures."



Perris City Councilwoman Rita Rogers autographs a mural during the Black History Community Expo.



The day's activities included train rides for youngsters.