



Perris Press Release

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P-Town Supporters Rally to Raise Funds

Supporters of Perris' P-Town Combat Sports Academy walked, hopped, skipped and jumped to raise money for the volunteer-operated program that mentors 600 aspiring football players and boxers every year.

By the time the May 4 "Perris Valley Heroes for Youth Relay" concluded at Foss Field Park, event organizers said they had come close to reaching their goal of \$50,000 for the non-profit academy.

Proceeds came from individual and business contributions, a previously held silent auction of sports memorabilia and contributions from City of Perris officials.

Perris Mayor Daryl Busch led about 75 walkers/runners/strollers on the initial lap around Foss Park. Other dignitaries included Perris City Councilman Julio Rodriguez, City Councilwoman Rita Rogers, Perris Police Chief John Hill and Riverside County Supervisor Marion Ashley.

P-Town founder Andre Mitchell also was on hand. Mitchell, a Los Angeles police officer, has worked with the City on the boxing and youth football programs for nearly a decade. As a fugitive tracker whose job takes him all over the country, Mitchell said he founded the sports programs as a way of reaching out to children and teen-agers that headed down the wrong path and found themselves in the criminal justice system as a result.

Mayor Busch said Mitchell and P-Town are providing invaluable mentorship to Perris youth. The City stepped in to help P-Town, which lost some funding as a result of the state's decision to eliminate municipal redevelopment agencies.

"Our youth need positive activities and if we did not lend a hand, P-Town might be forced to cut some of their programs," Busch said. "For some kids, this is the only activities they get to participate in, and for some of them, that can be life-saving."

Busch also noted that the relay for youth fits in nicely with the ongoing "Live Well Perris" program the City is developing and will unveil in the next few weeks. That initiative emphasizes health eating and active living programs, like walking.

"It's a great day to get some good exercise," Busch said.

Councilwoman Rogers noted that P-Town is "volunteer driven with no paid staff." She said she has spoken to youngsters whose grades, self-esteem and confidence have skyrocketed thanks to their participation in the boxing club or the football league, formerly known as the Perris Patriots and now known as the Perris Panthers.

"I've seen their grades, I've seen the changes in their lives," Rogers said.

Councilman Rodriguez said P-Town helps keep "youth off the streets and that is a win-win for everybody."

"I am incredibly excited to be here," he told the crowd that gathered at the relay's opening ceremony.

Supervisor Ashley, a Perris resident, noted that "nothing is more important than our youth" and that "getting them involved in activities that promote discipline, teamwork and the important of winning and losing graciously is paramount to developing adults of good character.

"Sports provide those kinds of lessons," Ashley said. "This is wonderful event—it is building the future of our community."

A contingent from P-Town took part in the day's activities as well, including some boxers who sparred and shadow-boxed and Perris Panthers football players. The latter included Alex Ruelas, 13, a student at Lakeside Middle School, who has played in the Panthers' league for six years. He says playing football taught him fundamental skills and teamwork.

"If you don't play together as a team, you don't win," Alex said. "And it keeps us in shape too."



Sebastian Rendon, 13, another football player,

said poor performance in the classroom means no playing time during games. That provides an incentive for him and his peers to do well in school.

"It's great that we get to support the league," he said as he completed a lap around Foss Park.

Mitchell, who also addressed the crowd during opening ceremonies, thanked his parents—Bobby and Rosemary—for supporting his programs and also said that without assistance from the City of Perris, P-Town would not exist.

"There are many great people here who believe in my dream and my vision," Mitchell said. "It's not about me. It about volunteering and helping out your community. I chose to move here. I want to live here. I'm not going anywhere. I love the City of Perris."



Perris Mayor Daryl Busch leads a contingent of walkers in the honorary opening lap of the "Perris Valley Heroes for Youth Relay" on May 4. The event took place to raise money for the P-Town Combat Sports Academy.



Walkers included Andre Mitchell, a Perris resident who co-founded the P-Town Combat Sports Academy, and Perris Deputy City Manager Darren Madkin.



Riverside County Supervisor Marion Ashley and Perris City Councilman Julio Rodriguez stand at attention during the playing of the National Anthem.



Perris City Councilwoman Rita Rogers shows off some dance moves to cadets from the California Military Institute, who took part in the May 4 relay at Foss Field Park.