



## City's Multi-Cultural Festival Draws Crowds

Embracing and celebrating Perris' cultural diversity.

Those were the twin themes to the City's annual Multi-Cultural Festival that drew an estimated 4,000 people to the City Hall Campus on Sept. 29.

The many faces of Perris' Latino communities took center stage at the festival, which included appearance by City, Riverside County and state officials, music and dancing, an open-air religious service, a citizenship class and plenty of great ethnic food.

The festival takes place every September to commemorate Mexican Independence Day on Sept. 16, to celebrate the "Day of the Charro" (Mexican cowboys) and to honor the many years of work on behalf of Perris Valley immigrants by Luz and Antonio Ayala, who began the TODEC Legal Center in 1986. TODEC (Training Occupational Development Educating Communities) works with immigrants so they can learn English, complete citizenship classes and acquire the necessary educational and job skills to thrive in the U.S. The organization, which is headquartered on D Street in Perris, provides services throughout Riverside, San Bernardino, and Imperial Counties.

This year's festival drew Perris Mayor Daryl Busch, Mayor Pro-Tem Mark Yarbrough, City Councilmembers Julio Rodriguez and Rita Rogers; Riverside County Supervisor Marion Ashley; State Rep. Jose Medina (D-Riverside); State Sen. Richard Roth (D-Riverside) and Riverside County Sheriff Stan Sniff. Also present were Mexican consul Carolina Zaragosa from the consulate in San Bernardino and dignitaries from Perris' sister City of Coltija in the state of Michoacan.

Luz and Antonio addressed the throngs who gathered in front of Perris City Hall, saying events like the multi-cultural festival work because all segments of Perris work together for common purpose.

"Let's have all parts of the City work as one community and prosper in unity," Antonio Ayala said.

Mayor Busch, Ashley and Medina presented certificates of appreciation to the Ayalas.

The festival represented cultures from Mexico, Ecuador, Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala, Panama and Brazil. Medina said the variety shows Perris truly is a cultural mecca for people from all over the Latin world and those folks take pride in their roots.

"You can feel that pride," he said. "They want to carry on the history and traditions of where they came from."

Perris also deserves credit for making that cultural mixture a success. "It speaks very well of the City that they recognize the importance of diversity and inclusiveness," he said. "That makes for a City that makes everyone feel welcome."

Ashley said he supports the TODEC vision, which is to create a workforce that thrives in an evolving workplace by becoming proficient in English, obtaining the necessary technical expertise and studying to become American citizens. TODEC's work becomes even more important as the Latino population in Riverside County approaches 50 percent, he said.

"They want to educate and inform the Latino communities and help them assimilate," Ashley said. "Anyone can move up in our country. All it takes is the needed tools and a great work ethic."

Mayor Busch thanked the crowd for making the 2103 festival one of the best he's ever seen.

"We have a great turnout on a great day," he said. "Working together is what makes things happen."

Busch pointed out that Supervisor Ashley provided office space for Medina, Roth and U.S. Rep. Mark Takano, D-Riverside, from excess space he occupies at Perris Police Headquarters across from City Hall.

"That's cooperation," he said.

City Councilwoman Rita Rogers echoed the Mayor's sentiments: "In this marvelous City of Perris, in unity we can achieve anything."

Perris Mayor Pro-Tem Mark Yarbrough called the multi-cultural festival "the fabric of who we are as a community."

"It's great to enjoy the wealth of our cultural diversity which the City's events always bring to this community," Yarbrough said.

City Councilman Julio Rodriguez said he supports any event that celebrates Perris' diversity. "It's always a great day when we can come together to celebrate the cultures present not only in our City but in our county and country," Rodriguez said.



California Assemblyman Jose Medina (right) presents a certificate of appreciation to TODEC founders Luz and Antonio Ayala during the Sept. 29 multi-cultural festival, an event that drew 4,000 visitors.



Riverside County Supervisor Marion Ashley (right) presents Antonio and Luz Ayala with a certificate by the Riverside County Board of Supervisors.



Perris Mayor Daryl Busch receives the American flag from cowboy Alex Medina during ceremonies at the Sept. 29 multi-cultural festival.



Perris Mayor Pro-Tem Mark Yarbrough with Mexican consul Carolina Zaragosa from the Mexican consulate in San Bernardino.



Perris City Councilman Julio Rodriguez addresses the crowd: "It's always a great day when we can come together to celebrate the cultures present not only in our City but in our county and country."