



## Costumed Crowd Turnout for Halloween Fest

Ghouls, goblins and ghosts, pirates and princesses, sailors and Sponge Bob, ninjas and teen-age mutant ninjas all turned out Oct. 25 for the annual City of Perris Halloween festival.

The big fright-fest always draws numbers of revelers who enjoy the family atmosphere, low-cost entertainment and Halloween spirit in a safe environment. The festival includes a costume contest, games, music and the appearance of the City's mounted posse, who patrolled the Cesar Chavez Library grounds on horseback, stopping plenty of times to let children pet their horses and posing for pictures.

Perris City Councilman Julio Rodriguez judged some of the costume contests. He said the Halloween fest is among his favorite City-sponsored events.

"This is one of the events I used to come to when I was a kid," Rodriguez said. "There are a lot of new faces and I see a lot of children. We are one of the oldest cities in this area but we have one of the youngest populations. We have a commitment to young families. Where else can you go and have so much clean, plain fun on a Friday night? Everybody loves Halloween."

Event organizers estimated the crowd at between 1,500 and 2,000. Some were first-timers; others circle the date on the calendar year after year.

Cesar and Maria Maya are new to Perris and came to the Halloween fest for the first time this year, bringing their children – Olivia, 5, Cesar Jr. 3, and Isaiah, 7 months—along. Cesar Maya is a Marine sergeant whose service includes two tours of duty in Afghanistan. Little Isaiah dressed as a dragon. The older children came as, what else, young Marines.

"We want to get to know the community and see our children have fun," Cesar Maya said. "This is a great environment. It's right at a library which encourages kids to stay in school!"

Evelyn Martinez has been coming to the Halloween festivities with her mom, sisters, children and friends since she for the last 10 years. A decade ago, she dressed as Raggedy Ann. This year, she came back as the same character. Her daughter, Adabel, 1, came as Raggedy Ann Jr.

"It's a character that never goes out of style," Evelyn Martinez said. "This is a great time to dress up and have fun."

Brother and sister Deanna and Jess Barajas dressed as clowns for the Halloween festival. They handed out candy, honked a horn and in general spread good cheer among the crowd. Jesse Barajas, 16, attends California Military Institute and volunteers as part of his school's community service programs. So helping out at Halloween was no big deal.

"It gives me the opportunity to help out," he said.

Monique Guerrero brought her children, Marcus, 11, and Keyonnie, 3. Marcus dressed as a zombie from "The Walking Dead" television series while Keyonnie came as Disney character Doc McStuffins. Her fiancé, Tray Ticey, also attended.

"This is close to home, it's safe and it's a great place to have a great time," Monique Guerrero said. "The City of Perris is the best!"

The night's entertainment included an impromptu dance from Michael Jackson impersonator Mykel Hicks, 6, who wowed the crowd. Mykel had the moves, the look, the glasses and the panache to pull off the impersonation. He had one more thing—zombie makeup for effect. Mom Valerie Hicks said the Halloween festival represents "family fun" that she and her kids enjoy.

"We've had a most enjoyable time," she said.

Several civic organizations came out to support the Halloween festival, including volunteers from the Perris Boys and Girls Club. Club supporter Jose Ramos thanked the City for sponsoring many great events in recent months—including the Tour de Perris bicycle ride in October, several workouts held as part of the Live Well Perris healthy eating active living campaign and the upcoming Veteran's Day Parade, Tree Lighting Ceremony and Holiday Parade.

"This is a City that cares about the people who live here," Ramos said.



Perris residents Cesar Maya and his wife, Maria, with their children: Isaiah, 7 months, Olivia, 5, an Cesar Jr., 3.



Scary clowns Jesse Barajas, 16, and his sister, Deanna, 21, added to the flavor of the annual Perris Halloween Festival.



Perris City employees Rachel Pinedo and Sabrina Chavez confer with City Councilman Julio Rodriguez as they determine a winner in one of the costume contests that were part of the festival.



Mykel Hicks, 6, performs as a Michael Jackson impersonator during the Perris Halloween Festival.