



## Small Business Summit Focuses on Veterans

Former NFL great and actor Fred Dryer urged military men and women returning from combat operations overseas to seek medical help for possible brain injuries, noting that collisions on the gridiron are remarkably similar to those suffered by soldiers exposed to roadside bombs.

Dryer said his post-football career was followed by bouts of forgetfulness and lack of focus, symptoms later diagnosed as the result of seven "major" and numerous minor concussions suffered during high school, college and a 13-year pro career. Dryer said that as a result of excellent medical treatment received in the last three years, some of the previously suffered brain trauma has been repaired.

"Your brain is being concussed in battle," Dryer said Nov. 12 during remarks in Perris at the third annual Small Business Summit, a veterans-focused event that drew 800 to City Hall. "You have to go out and find assistance from a health-care provider and get a true accounting of where you stand with brain trauma."

The small business summit, put on by the Perris-based Southwest Veterans Business Resource Center, seeks to help current and former service members return to civilian life by assisting them with starting small businesses and connecting with potential employers. Tuesday's day-long event featured workshops about how to use the Internet and social media to advertise a business, keys to obtaining government contracts and the advantage of locating companies in Perris, which can result in tax advantages.

Dryer noted that "how people assimilate into a community is often tied to their mental state." He thanked Perris officials for organizing Tuesday's summit, which he said makes veterans feel like the City welcomes them and their contributions.

"It's a great model for how a community outreaches to veterans and how it is trying to assimilate them into the City," Dryer said.

Dryer played with the New York Giants and Los Angeles Rams from 1968 to 1981. Afterwards, he became a successful actor who played the lead role in the television series "Hunter." He attributes his improving memory and mental clarity to a diet that avoids junk foods, alcohol and tobacco and includes Omega 3 and Omega 5 supplements.

Former Marine Joanne Evans took in Dryer's remarks with an extra sense of urgency. She said her grandson has been suffering the effects of possible brain injury since surviving a roadside bomb in Baghdad. He is having trouble studying and focusing as he transitions to civilian life.

"This was an excellent presentation," Evans said. "It is something everybody needs to know."

Tuesday's summit attracted employers like CalFire and the Riverside County Sheriff's Department, the Department of General Services and Wells Fargo. The City made much of its campus available and provided the stage which Dryer and other dignitaries addressed the audience.

Perris City Councilman Al Landers served as master of ceremonies. He said the City of Perris is taking a leading role across the country in making veterans of all services and conflicts builds on a century-old legacy the community has enjoyed with the military.

"It is vital for us as a City and a country to make welcome our returning veterans who have sacrificed so much for our freedom," Landers said. "The City of Perris is progressive and aggressive when it comes to providing the greatest opportunity to our veterans returning from far-flung warzones. Whether it's getting them employment or medical assistance to treat the pain and suffering they have endured for our freedom, this City continues to show its commitment to all veterans."

Perris Mayor Daryl Busch, in comments made during the opening ceremonies, thanked the Southwest Business Veterans Resource Center for making its third summit better than ever.

"This is so important for all the veterans who give us so much," said Busch, a Navy veteran.

Al Renteria, a retired Marine and one of the summit's organizers, called the event "fantastic," adding that speakers and companies from Chicago and Rhode Island came to Perris.

"Without the City of Perris, none of this would be possible," Renteria said. "This City has opened itself up to the country—it is the veterans' gateway to community success."

While Dryer's comments focused on overcoming combat injuries, another speaker—Survivor contestant Gillian Larson of Temecula—urged veterans to never give up on themselves. At 66, Larson is one of the oldest "Survivor" contestants ever, having taken part in the 2008 season which was filmed in Gabon in Africa.

Larson's motto: Dream it, believe it, prepare for it, do it. And always remember that veterans and their families make it possible for everyone to live the American Dream.

"Give yourself two or three minutes every day to think about who you are and what you are capable of," Larson said. "Then value our military and their families who have provided that opportunity."



Former NFL great Fred Dryer addresses a crowd of more than 100 during the Nov. 12 third annual Small Business Summit in the City of Perris.



Following his remarks on traumatic brain injuries, Fred Dryer autographs a program for former Marine Joanne Evans, whose grandson is suffering blast-related effects of a roadside bomb while serving with the Army in Iraq.



A group of veterans who worked at the City of Perris' third annual Small Business Summit pose with former NFL great and actor Fred Dryer.