



Large Grant Keeps Live Well Program Healthy

The City of Perris has been awarded a grant of nearly \$1 million to expand its hugely successful Live Well Perris health initiative through 2016.

"We are delighted and excited to take our Live Well Perris initiative to the next level," said Mayor Daryl Busch. "As we move forward, we will continue to stress the importance of eating nutritious food, getting out to exercise and taking control of your overall health. A healthy community is a happy community."

The Riverside County Board of Supervisors this week approved a grant of \$934,229 for Perris, which will be used to enhance a variety of nutrition education programs. Those include holding classes encouraging the consumption of healthier beverages, training youth to become involved in local health projects and funding neighborhood food access research.

One of determining factors in the City receiving the grant was the willingness of municipal leaders to encourage healthier lifestyles among their residents. Perris stands out among regional communities in spreading the message of "healthy eating active living," said Gayle Hoxter, a supervisor for the Riverside County Department of Public Health.

City officials joined county representatives at several events in 2013, including a "Rethink Your Drink" outreach at a Perris supermarket in September that drew hundreds of people who learned the benefits of drinking water instead of sugary beverages.

Hoxter said one of the slogans for the ongoing health initiative is "champions for change." Perris is primed to make that motto a reality, she said.

"There are many Perris residents who are going to become champions and the City will reap the rewards of that positive change," she said.

Perris elected officials were quick to embrace the Live Well campaign, which included dozens of organized events. Every elected City official attended the June community health fair which kicked off Live Well Perris and drew nearly 2,000 participants.

Mayor Busch led a group of walkers around Paragon Park. Mayor Pro-Tem Mark Yarbrough led a hike and several bicycle rides through the City and Lake Perris State Recreation Area.

City Council members Al Landers and Rita Rogers took part in the Biggest Loser program and City Councilman Julio Rodriguez was a regular at weekly "Step Out to Work Out" aerobics, Tabata and hula-hoop sessions. Several staff members visited Perris schools to answer questions and pass out information encouraging participation in the Live Well Perris events. Staff members joined elected officials in participating in the "International Walk to School Day" in October.

A series of winter workouts drew more than 50 regulars, who spent their Saturday mornings exercising and getting into shape.

Big plans are in the works for Live Well Perris 2014.

The program kicks off Jan. 11 with the initial weigh-in for the 2014 edition of the Biggest Loser Contest from 8:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. at Mercado Park at 10th and D Streets. Winter workouts will continue until April, alternating every Saturday between Mercado Park and May Ranch Park on Walnut Street on Perris' north side. The upcoming version of Live Well Perris also calls for a Mud Run tentatively scheduled for September.

Other events are in the early stages and will be announced when specific plans are finalized.

Councilman Landers said Perris residents made the program a success.

"Live Well Perris succeeded because of the willingness of Perris residents to take charge of and improve their own lives," Landers said. "Our City continues to move forward and take care of the needs of our citizens."

Councilwoman Rogers said winning the grant shows that Perris' commitment to healthy living is becoming known and respected throughout Southern California.

"We are becoming a leader and being recognized for that leadership," she said. "Our expanding Live Well Perris program will allow us to reach children in schools and show them the path to healthy living."

As a grandmother of nine, Rogers said she takes healthy living seriously and has been encouraging her family to avoid sugary drinks and snacks and replace them with lean meats, fruits and vegetables.

Perris Mayor Pro-Tem Mark Yarbrough said the City conducted Live Well Perris events in 2013 with a very small budget "and a lot of heart." The new grant, he said, means "we can take this program to the next level—and beyond."

"This is a great opportunity to get people thinking about eating healthy, exercising and taking control of their lives," he said. "I feel honored that the City has been chosen to spread this important message."

City Councilman Julio Rodriguez said that obtaining the grant shows "that local government is working for the betterment of our people."

"Everything starts with education," he said. "It gives us an incredible opportunity to refocus peoples' attention on living healthier lives. To say that this grant is a win-win for the City is an understatement."



Perris Mayor Daryl Busch (right) leads a group of residents on a walk through a City park as part of the Live Well Perris healthy eating active living campaign in 2013. The City will expand the program in 2014.



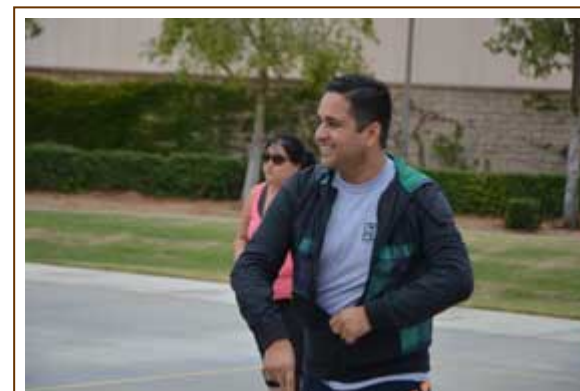
Perris City Councilman Al Landers weighs-in during the Biggest Loser competition at a community health fair in June, which kicked off the Live Well Perris campaign.



Perris City Councilwoman Rita Rogers said the Live Well Perris campaign made her more conscious of the food choices she makes.



Perris Mayor Pro-Tem Mark Yarbrough (right) leads nearly 100 residents on a hike through the Lake Perris State Recreation Area, part of the 2013 Live Well Perris initiative.



Perris City Councilman Julio Rodriguez was a regular at aerobics sessions that made up the Step Out to Work out segment of the Live Well Perris initiative.