



Perris Press Release

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Small Business Summit Brings Opportunities to Perris

The Small Business Summit Thursday in Perris was meant to link people struggling to find jobs with companies looking to hire employees, establish business roots in the City and help grow the local economy.

Particular emphasis was placed on supporting military personal, both those still on active duty and those already separated from the service.

Call it a day of "vet-networking."

Perris is a "hub zone" for small businesses, said Albert Renteria, a retired Marine who organized the Small Business Summit, which 83 exhibitors and 420 individuals to the Bob Glass Gym on the Perris City Hall Campus. That was full capacity.

Hub zones are areas which traditionally have been underutilized for business and as such, receive special consideration when government agencies award contracts. The bottom line, Renteria says: hub zones are eligible for up to \$30 billion in government contracts.

"They are a real prime spot to bring in small businesses," said Renteria, who last year started the Southwest Veterans Business Resource Center on the Perris City Hall Campus. "Downtown Perris is classified as a hub zone and we intend to bring small businesses here."

Military veterans are a particular focus for hub-zone businesses, both as owners and workers. They have on-the-job experience, a wide variety of employment skills and have shown their commitment by volunteering to serve in uniform. The City of Perris has long-standing ties to the military, thanks to its close proximity to March Air Reserve Base and representation on the March Joint Powers Commission. The City also leases space for \$1 a year to the Southwest Veterans Business Resource Center.

"We need to do everything we can to make life easier for our veterans," said Perris Mayor Pro-Tem Al Landers, who addressed the crowd at the opening of the business summit. "They have all sacrificed something and some have sacrificed all."

Landers spoke from personal experience. His brother, Richard Landers, was killed while serving with the elite 101st Airborne Division in Vietnam in 1965. Landers said his brother's death remains fresh in his memory nearly 50 years later.

"Perris is committed to helping veterans and to making their lives and careers more fruitful," Landers said. "I am so proud of our City for hosting this event. It's another step in making our City the great place that is becoming."

City Councilwoman Joanne Evans, a former Marine, said the business summit provided valuable tips and information about how to start a small business.

"It's a wonderful opportunity," Evans said.

Evans said the number of employment and educational opportunities has decreased for veterans in the years since she left the military, due to California's chronic budget woes that have forced many colleges to cut courses and hike tuition.

"It seems there were more opportunities available when I left the service," she said.

Perris City Councilwoman Rita Rogers said finding out how to secure government contracts could be the difference between small business success and failure.

"It's wonderful to be able to promote small businesses within our City and give them the opportunity so they can expand and grow," she said.

Representatives of financial, educational, government, telecommunications and service corporations and agencies filled the Perris City gym to the brim during the business summit. Those included AT&T, Wells Fargo, Arco, the University of Redlands, the Riverside County Sheriff's Department, the Department of Transportation and the Veterans Administration. Some were recruiting; others pitching educational opportunities. The daylong summit featured workshops about the advantages of operating in a hub zone, how to market to government, business security, how to create a successful business plan and how to survive in a tough economy.

Jim Spee, of the University of Redlands and Jesse Medina, of the Association of the United States Army were among those who attended the summit to provide business tips and opportunities to veterans and non-veterans. Of the 420 people who attended the summit, 25 percent were seeking jobs and 159 were veterans.

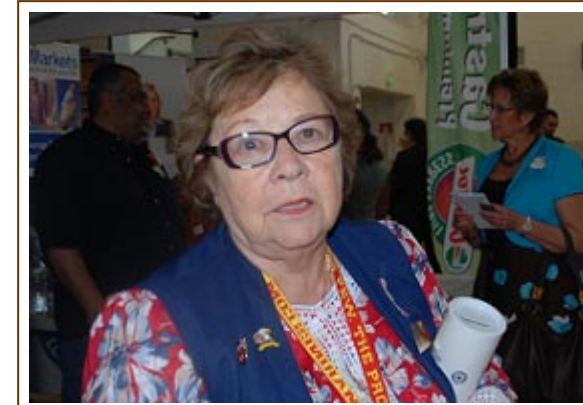
Spee said attracting businesses to the City's Downtown hub would produce an initial burst of employment and sales and secondary benefits as well. Businesses would attract other businesses, which in turn would create more demand and more jobs.

"It would grow the tax base," Spee said. "It would feed the economy. I congratulate the City of Perris for supporting the veterans' business center. It's awesome."

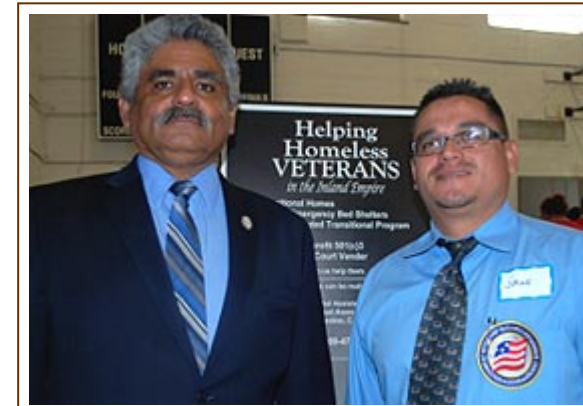
Medina said targeting veterans makes perfect sense, since tens of thousands leave the military every year and many call the Inland Empire home.

Jorge Ramirez was one of the veterans seeking job information and assistance. An Army combat engineer, Ramirez completed a tour in the Persian Gulf in 1993. He came to the seminar seeking a job in the security business.

"There were a lot of resources here," Ramirez said. "It's definitely a nice experience to so many vendors interested in helping veterans."



Perris City Councilwoman Joanne Evans, a former Marine, attended the Small Business Summit at the City Hall Campus. She called the summit a "wonderful opportunity" for veterans to learn about job opportunities, including operating a small business.



Retired Marine Albert Renteria and former Army combat engineer Jorge Ramirez at the seminar in Perris. Renteria said Perris is a prime spot for relocating business.



Jesse Medina, Jim Spee and Sheila Bishop at the Small Business Seminar. They came to talk about educational and business opportunities available to men and women leaving the U.S. military.