



## Perris Press Release

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### American Legion Honors Andre Mitchell

Perris resident Andre Mitchell—who founded the Perris Patriot football league and a boxing gym to mentor hundreds of area children—was honored twice recently by the California Department of the American Legion.

Mitchell, a Los Angeles police officer, received the Legion's "Officer of the Year for Community Service" and the same award from the Legion's honor society—the "Forty and Eight."

Perris City Councilwoman Joanne Evans made the announcement during a recent City Council meeting. Evans attended Legion's annual convention, held in 2012 in Redding, when Mitchell was honored. Mitchell's wife, Deann, was also present.

"What he's done for our community is amazing," Evans said. "He sets goals and objectives for them and encourages them to stay in school. He's made a wonderful improvement to our City. We are lucky to have him."

Mitchell said he was honored to receive the award and thanked the City for



Deann Mitchell, American Legion Officer of the Year Andre Mitchell and Perris City Councilwoman Joanne Evans at the Legion's 2012 convention in Redding.

supporting his programs.

"I would not be able to accomplish anything without the help of the City of Perris," he said. "I am honored to be awarded by the American Legion, but I would have received this award if the City of Perris had not taken a chance on me." Mitchell has worked with the City since 2001.

He helped establish the Perris Patriots Football League and worked with the City to create Patriot Park, which has become home to many sporting events. The City constructed and maintains a field complex for the league. The league raises funds to provide team uniforms, referees, coaches and camps for advanced instruction. The arrangement has proven so successful that the National Football League Players Association would like to see it become a nationwide model of public-private cooperation. In the last three years, 15 former Perris Patriot football players have received college scholarships at such universities as the U.S. Military Academy, Florida, Oregon State and Colorado.

In 2009, Mitchell once again joined forces with the City to open the P-Town Combat Sports Academy to teach boxing and martial arts to youngsters 7 to 21 years old, a venue that attracts hundreds of youngsters each month. In 2009, Mitchell was honored as Perris Citizen of the Year.

In 2011, he served as grand marshal in the City's Black History Month Parade.

Mitchell said his work in law enforcement prompted him to establish youth sports programs. He is part of a fugitive-tracking squad that travels across the U.S. to arrest and return suspected criminals to Los Angeles to face justice. During long cross-country flights, Mitchell said he talked with many of the suspects, who often told him they grew up without fathers or any positive role models and had little motivation to do well in school.

As part of the programs he founded, Mitchell insisted that all participants spend the last 30 minutes of every practice session completing homework.

Mitchell was nominated for the American Legion awards by Post 381 in Los Angeles. The post is made up of current and retired Los Angeles police officers. Richard Kalk, a retired officer at the post, said he knew Mitchell when the two worked at the Hollenbeck division 24 years ago.

Kalk said the "Forty and Eight" honor society of the American Legion honored Mitchell for his "absolutely awesome" work on behalf of young people. The "Forty and Eight" dates back to the time just after World War I when veterans returning to America formed the organization. The name comes from the size of the railroad boxcars used to transport American troops to the French front. The cars were big enough to carry 40 men or eight horses.

Kalk said Mitchell's work makes Perris a better community for all its residents.

"It's hard to comprehend what he has accomplished," Kalk said. "The City of Perris is on top of the world with this guy running around."



: Perris resident Andre Mitchell receives a plaque for his community service presented by (left) Hugh Crooks, commander of the California Department of the American Legion and (right) Richard Kalk, a retired Los Angeles police officer and the man who nominated Mitchell for Officer of the Year honors.