



Perris Press Release

Contact: Joe Vargo, Perris Public Information Officer
Phone: 951-956-2120
jvargo@cityofperris.org

Annual Relay for Life Raises Money and Cancer Awareness

Smiles, laughter and good humor were plentiful among the hundreds of people who gathered last weekend at Foss Park in Perris.

But the underlying message was serious.

The event was the American Cancer Society's annual Relay for Life, a fund-raiser to boost awareness of the disease and help pay for treatment and patient support.

Perris Mayor Pro-Tem and City Councilman Mark Yarbrough headed the City's contingent who took part in the 24-hour relay. They accepted a plaque on behalf of the City, along with Perris Auto Speedway promoter Don Kazarian, who has raised at least \$10,000 a year for the last six years to fight cancer.

All three took a ceremonial walk around Foss Park as the relay kicked off, passing under a bridge of balloons set up for the event.

"Who among us has not been touched by cancer or has not had a friend or family member affected?" Kazarian said. "It is a disease that strikes the rich and poor, the old and young. No one is immune from its devastating effects. I am proud to be part of this event, because it is for such an important cause."

Yarbrough announced that his grand-daughter, Halle, was recently diagnosed with leukemia. The 3-year-old is responding to treatment and the family hopes she will continue to hold her own. Yarbrough said doctors believe they have discovered the illness early and have begun an aggressive treatment plan. He said he came to the Relay for Life to urge people to get regular checkups and to support the American Cancer Society.

"The more support you have, the easier it is to deal with this terrible disease," Yarbrough said. "Support makes all the difference."

Yarbrough brought his race car and invited cancer survivors to autograph it. Many did. The City of Perris provided the use of Foss Park and its stage used throughout the relay.

Evans said several close friends from her days as a spokesman for CalFire succumbed to cancer. They were young people who died in their 30s, far before they time, she said.

"You lose these people, you hate this disease," Evans said. "The only way to fight it is to get together. You've got to fight it from the heart."

Event organizer Ray Cisneros estimated the crowd at 300. He said the goal of the Perris relay is \$60,000. Cisneros thanked the City of Perris for supporting the fund-raiser.

"Although the economy has left people really hurting, the City of Perris stepped up to support our effort," Cisneros said.

"They really came through and we are grateful. We have to stop this disease from ruining more lives."

Lynn Durbin, who was diagnosed with breast cancer in March, marched in the relay. She said she is confident of her ability to beat the disease.

"I will be back next year," Durbin said.

Gios Torres, 27, is a four-year survivor of Hodgkin's Lymphoma. He underwent blood transfusions, six months of chemotherapy and radiation treatments. He said he feels fine today and came to the Relay for Life to "show support for fellow survivors."

"Let them know how important they are," Torres said.

Bob McGinty, who came with his own relay squad—the 100-member Team Bob—said he is three-time cancer survivor. He's battled prostate cancer, basal skin cell cancer and had a malignant growth removed from his neck. But he was all smiles as he sat in the survivor's tent sharing his story. He too praised the City of Perris for its continuing commitment to supporting cancer research and prevention.

"This City is awesome," McGinty said. "I don't think we have ever asked for anything that this City did not help provide. Perris is a place with a down-home feeling. This event is about raising awareness and learning about early detection and treatment. This is important stuff. We choose to take part in events like this because they are important."



Cancer survivor Gios Torres at the Relay for Life. "Show support for fellow survivors."



Perris Auto Speedway Promoter Don Kazarian, Mayor Pro-Tem Joanne Evans and City Councilman Mark Yarbrough walked to show their support for the Relay for Life.



Cancer survivors gathered outside a tent set up for them at the Relay for Life.



Breast cancer survivor Lynn Durbin strolls the grounds of Foss Park, accompanied by her friend, Tim Rodgers.



Signs urged people to adopt healthy lifestyle choices.