



Perris Press Release

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Annual Tree-Lighting Ceremony Starts the Holiday Season

The City of Perris kicked off the holiday season Friday night as Mayor Daryl Busch led a contingent of elected officials who threw the switch that lit the 40-foot tree at the City Hall Campus, a celebration that drew more than 1, 200 people.

The annual Tree Lighting Ceremony has grown enormously in recent years as the City welcomes school children, choirs and dance groups from all over Riverside County to sing carols on stage while the audience looks on. This year's 24th annual event also featured Santa Claus arriving in a one-horse open sleigh, a petting zoo and snacks provided by City staff members.

The weather was perfect at Mayor Busch, Mayor Pro-Tem Joanne Evans and City Clerk Judy Haughney led the crowd as it counted down from 10 to 0 in preparation of the tree-lighting. When the count reached zero, hundreds of bulbs illuminated the big tree outside the City Council Chambers.

Lots of brightly decorated boxes were placed under the Christmas tree, adding to the air of festivity.

Teddy bears by the added to the holiday feel of the event. A toy train looped around the packages.

"We are really excited about this event," Busch said. "We always get a huge turnout. I am really, really pleased that a huge crowd has turned out. We wish everybody a Merry Christmas and a happy and prosperous new year."

Mayor Pro-Tem Evans helped Santa Claus as he heard from hundreds of children who expressed their gift list. X-Box 360 Modern Warfare, 3D Nintendo DSi, dolls, toys and iPods were among the hot items kids told Santa Claus they were hoping for after being good all year long.

Evans said she was delighted by the huge crowd.

"I don't think I have ever seen such a large turnout for this event," she said. "The Christmas spirit in this City is truly amazing."

Choirs and dance groups from several schools took part in Friday's Tree Lighting Ceremony. Those included contingents from the California Military Institute, Perris High School, Heritage High School, sky View Elementary Schools, folklorico groups and church groups.

CMI cadets Darrand Niblett, Aaron Guerrero and David Nguyen served as part of the Color Guard that carried in the U.S. and California banners at the start of the ceremony.

"This is a great time to hang out with family, see a lot of your friends and it's a very festive way to connect with your community," said Niblett, 17, a senior.

Guerrero, 16, a sophomore, said he loves events like the tree lighting because "they bring the community together."
Nguyen, 15, a sophomore, called Perris "a small town with a big heart and a great sense of community."

Ray and Sharon Cisneros brought about 40 Boy and Girl Scouts from four troops to the lighting ceremony. They performed "Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree."

"We just love to see the smiles on the kids' faces," Sharon Cisneros said. "They work hard at this and it's great to see the

City of Perris working so hard to bring the community together."

Delia Garcia, who coordinates the holiday choir at the Rob Reiner Children & Families Center School in Perris, said she looks forward to appearing at the tree-lighting ceremony every year. She's taken groups from the campus since 2004. About 40 4-year-olds performed "Feliz Navidad" and "Ha Ha Happy Holiday" for the crowd.

She said the students have practiced the songs for about three weeks.

"It's a great honor to be here to represent our school and the City of Perris," Garcia said. "It is a joy to be part of this celebration. It's very meaningful. We appreciate the City of Perris. We're proud to represent them."

Belen Duran-Reyes, director for the "Rays of Sunshine" choir from Banning, said the group incorporates flutes and guitars into their performance. Their selections included "Jingle Bells," "Silent Night" and "Oh When the Saints Go Marching In."

"The City of Perris has always welcomed us," Duran-Belen said. "It is a very friendly and welcoming City. They make us feel like family."



Perris City Clerk Judy Haughney, Mayor Pro-Tem Joanne Evans and Mayor Daryl Busch share a laugh at the 24th Annual Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony at the City Hall Campus Friday evening.



Perris Mayor Daryl Busch congratulates volunteer Margarita Sanchez, who attends Perris High School, on her civic spirit.



Santa Claus brought smiles to the faces of these two girls at the annual tree-lighting ceremony.



Ten-year-old Robbynne French concluded the evening's musical entertainment with her rendition of "O Holy Night."



Delia Garcia, coordinator of the choir at Rob Reiner Children & Families Center School in Perris, rocks to the music of "Feliz Navidad."