



## Perris News

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### Perris Celebrates "Read Across America"

Mayor Daryl Busch and City Manager Richard Belmudez led a contingent of Perris elected representatives and municipal staff on a trip to Palms Elementary School Thursday to emphasize the importance of reading.

The group from Perris City Hall read classics from children's author Dr. Seuss and other books geared to the younger set and answered questions about their jobs for the City, from planning to redevelopment to parks and recreation to leading the City Council.

The annual visit was part of "Read Across America," a nationwide effort which celebrates the March 2 birthday of author Theodor Seuss Geisel, otherwise known as Dr. Seuss. City employees fanned out across the Palms campus, taking 30 minutes or so to read a book to kindergartners to sixth graders before beginning the question-and-answer sessions.

Each City reader adopted his or her own style. Some switched voices, giving every character a distinct sound. Some invited the students to form a circle. Others shared personal stories about themselves and their families. The Mayor and City Manager presented Frisbees.

"As City workers, we get a chance to work on a lot of interesting and important projects on behalf of our residents," Belmudez said. "But we don't often get to take a look at things from the perspective of children. This is fun to do, and it's important because we all benefit when children become good readers."

Belmudez read the Seuss classic, "Green Eggs and Ham."

Mayor Busch read to two different classes. Sitting in front of Jennifer Lindsey's students, the Mayor read "The True Story of the Three Little Pigs." For Lisa Powell's fifth-graders, he opted for "Thidwick the Big-hearted Moose."

Afterwards, Busch signed autographs for some students, handed out the goodies and invited the students to ask him questions about duties and responsibilities. The questions flew fast and furious.

How long have you been Mayor, one student asked. Ten years, he replied.

Is it fun, a second student inquired.

"I enjoy what I do," Busch answered. "We have a good City Council and we agree on what we want to do for our City."

Do you live in a big house, another wanted to know? No, Busch said.

How much do you earn as Mayor, a third inquired. About \$950 a month, came the reply.

"Most people don't do this for the money," Busch added.

Have you met President Obama, still another wanted to know.

"No I haven't," Busch replied. "But I've met Arnold (California governor Arnold Schwarzenegger) a couple of times and I'm taller than him!"

Some students asked issue-related questions. For instance, one wanted to know whether the City will bring an In-n-Out Burger to Perris. It will happen one day, the mayor replied.

What about another supermarket to Fourth Street? Busch said City staff is working to bring one to Perris this year.

"Hopefully one will open before summer," he said.

One student asked the Mayor if he enjoyed reading in public.

"I'm not really good at it, but I enjoy doing it," the Mayor said. "I find Dr. Seuss a bit tongue-tying."

Lindsey said she was delighted the Mayor and other City staff came to read aloud for Palms students.

"It makes them feel important," she said. "It helps them see that reading is important to the Mayor and should be important to them."

Other teachers also praised the City's effort. Instructor Shalley Burkholder said Accounting Supervisor Melinda Ward did an outstanding job of acting out all the characters in the book she read, "Horton Hears a Who."

Burkholder teaches a class of students with limited hearing, so she signed as Ward read the book.

"It was nice, and the students were very interested," she said.

Other City employees and representatives who took part in Thursday's reading activity included Deputy City Manager Darren Madkin, Executive Assistant Marilyn Fernholz, Planning Manager Brad Eckhardt, Assistant Director of Finance James Fructuoso, Redevelopment and Economic Development Manager Michael McDermott, Assistant Planner Sabrina Chavez, City Clerk Judy Haughney, Deputy City Clerk Vicki Kasad, City Attorney Eric Dunn, Assistant Director of Development Services Rene Avila, Capital Improvement Projects Manager Michael Morales, Human Resources and Risk Manager Isabel Lugo, Human Resource Analyst Saida Amozgar, Public Works Manager Daryl Hartwill, Information Technology Supervisor Arturo Cervantes, Community Services Manager Walter Carter III, Public Safety Commissioner Shawn Haughney and Planning Commissioner Dave Stuart.

▶ [See more photos on Facebook.](#)



Mayor Busch with students in teacher Lisa Powell's class.



Perris Mayor Daryl Busch answers questions for teacher Jennifer Lindsey's class.



The Mayor signs an autograph.



Associate Planner Sabrina Chavez made her group of students smile.



City Manager Richard Belmudez came prepared as he read Dr. Seuss.