



Perris News

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Annual Veteran's Day Parade Saturday, November 6

The City's Annual Veterans Day Parade takes place from 9:15 a.m. to 12 p.m. this Saturday and will feature more than 50 floats, marching bands, classic cars, military vehicles and equestrian units marching through the historic Downtown district.

Army Maj. Fred Gerdes, a two-tour veteran of Vietnam and the ROTC instructor at Perris High School, will serve as parade Grand Marshal.

"It's a great honor to serve as parade Grand Marshal and to teach at Perris High School," Gerdes said. "I am proud of this honor. It is good to be recognized."

The 180-member Perris High School Jr. ROTC will be among the units marching in Saturday's parade.

The day's activities begin with pre-parade entertainment performed by the Earth Angels, a Los Angeles-based trio who will sing songs from the 1940s, including the World War II classic, "Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy from Company B."

Free hand-waving flags and t-shirts will be given to the first 100 early-bird spectators.

At 10 a.m., the Veterans Day Parade will begin. The route begins at D and Fourth streets and proceeds north to San Jacinto Avenue. The best view of the parade is on San Jacinto between D Street and Perris Boulevard. The event stage will be set up at that location.

Gerdes said the Perris ROTC contingent includes freshmen to seniors and half are women. The unit consists of a color guard, canon team, rifle team and marching unit. Classroom work consists of lessons in military history and protocol, self-esteem, leadership, discipline and map reading. Gerdes said he encourages students to remain drug and alcohol free.

Gerdes was drafted in 1970 and spent one tour in Vietnam working in military intelligence and the other as an infantry soldier, coordinating B-52 bomber strikes. He spent 20 years in the military, including tours in Germany and the 1989 invasion of Panama, Operation Just Cause. He retired as major from the Santa Ana Recruiting Battalion and began teaching ROTC at Perris High School.

ROTC cadets wear uniforms and insignia on campus but Gerdes says most are not interested in a military career. They just want to test themselves mentally and physically.

"The students keep you young," Gerdes said. "I can't stay at home when I know I could be helping kids." Gerdes said he is most proud that Perris High School has for 14 consecutive years earned the ROTC Honor

UnitWith Distinction, the highest award a high-school continent can receive. It means the Perris JROTC is considered among the top 10 percent in the U.S.

Purcilla Patea, 16, serves as a JROTC squad leader. She said she enjoys the position because "I can tell people to stop talking" during drill and practice sessions.

"Everyone is friends," she said.

Caroline Jones, 15, said she hopes to one day become a military psychologist. She says of her involvement in the Perris High School Jr. ROTC program: "It's your home away from home."



Perris High School ROTC instructor Maj. Fred Gerdes: Proud to be chosen Grand Marshal for Perris Veterans Parade.



Cadets stand at attention while Maj. Fred Gerdes conducts a uniform inspection.



Maj. Fred Gerdes says participation in ROTC helps keep students drug and alcohol free.