



Perris News

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

Perris Officials Volunteer at 6th Annual Holiday Harvest

Perris elected officials set aside their official duties to become food servers, dishing out turkey dinner and all the trimmings for families and military veterans battling unemployment and homelessness during the tough economy.

Perris Mayor Daryl Busch and City Councilman Mark Yarbrough joined Riverside County Supervisor Marion Ashley and other members of the March Joint Powers Commission in serving traditional Thanksgiving dinner to 387 adults and children.

The 6th Annual "Holiday Harvest" took place Sunday at the Joint Training Center near March Air Reserve Base, property which is controlled by the March Joint Powers Commission. Recipients of the holiday dinner participate one of three programs housed in Joint Powers Commission property—U.S. Vets, Lutheran Social Services and Path of Life Ministries. Those programs provide education, employment and housing assistance for people trying to escape homelessness.

"These residents are part of the March family and this is our way of giving back during these tough times," said Lori Stone, executive director of the March Joint Powers Authority, the sister agency of the March Joint Powers Commission.

All the volunteer servers said they welcomed the chance to spread a little holiday cheer.

"This is the time of year when you give back to those who are not as fortunate as you are," said Mayor Busch, who came with his wife, Kay, to help serve turkey and all the trimmings. "It's a pleasure to be able to do this. My wife and I look forward to volunteering here every year."

Councilman Yarbrough, who came with his wife, Shelly, said the early Thanksgiving spirit of cooperation exemplifies the best of the American spirit.

"This is truly about people helping people," he said. "Instead of thinking about what you don't have, it's really nice to be able to think about what you do have and how you can help. I really enjoy this event. As bad as the economy is, it is nice to come together to share food and fellowship."

Supervisor Ashley, a Perris resident, said that despite some reports that the economy is turning around, plenty of people are still hurting. He said the people who received turkey, mashed potatoes, stuffing and pumpkin pie are trying to rebuild lives disrupted by economic factors beyond their control or veterans who have been affected mentally and physically as a result of their service.

"These are families who have run across tough times and veterans who have served our country and who need help," Ashley said.

Felicia Smith, 33, came to the Holiday Harvest with her daughters, Ayla, 14 months, and Ashley, 15. She said she has been living in the Lutheran Social Services shelter for 13 months as she tries to move to self-sufficiency.

"Things are really tough right now," Smith said. "I am glad to be able to come and enjoy this dinner. It is awesome that people take so much time out of their busy schedules to help out. I am so glad that people in this community

care about us and about our kids."

Pastor Leonard Jarman, of Path of Life Ministries, said many formerly middle-class families now live in the 142-bed transitional housing program he manages. In former times, Jarman said these families consisted of two parents working and living with their children in stable and comfortable surroundings. This recession has shattered those expectations, he said.

"These are not people who are pushing shopping carts," he said.

Jarman thanked the Perris elected officials and others who came out on a Sunday afternoon to inspire hope and encouragement among those who often feel downtrodden. He praised the March Joint Powers Authority and March Joint Powers Commission for supporting anti-homelessness program he believes will return families to more productive lives.

"We could not do it without them," Jarman said.



Perris Mayor Daryl Busch and Riverside County Supervisor Marion Ashley ladle out food during the 6th Annual Holiday Harvest celebration.



Perris City Councilman Mark Yarbrough worked the salad bar at the Holiday Harvest.



The Perris volunteers included City Councilman Mark Yarbrough, his wife, Shelley, and Kay Busch along with her husband, Perris Mayor Daryl Busch.



Felicia Smith, 33, with her daughter, Ayla, 14 months.