



Perris News

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Annual Tree Lighting Festivities Start Holiday Season on a Joyous Note

The sky was clear, the temperature perfect and the spirits festive during Perris annual Tree Lighting Ceremony on Friday, an event that drew a record crowd of about 2,500-holiday merrymakers.

Perris Mayor Daryl Busch, Mayor Pro-Tem Rita Rogers and City Councilwoman Joanne Evans headed the Perris City contingent at the 22nd tree lighting. Throngs of people lined up early to get a good vantage point before the three City leaders threw the switch and lighted tree to a thunderous applause.

"This is a wonderful event," Busch said. "It's the biggest we've ever had. Every year, it seems to get bigger and bigger. It's a pleasure to be out here to have a good time and welcome in the holiday season. I appreciate all the people who came out here tonight."



Perris Mayor Pro-Tem Rita Rogers, Mayor Daryl Busch, City Councilwoman Joanne Evans, Parks and Recreation Supervisor Maria Stewart and local singer James Isabel stand at attention during the playing of the National Anthem.



Young performers dressed the part as they sang "Jingle Bells."

More than 200 elementary, middle and high-school students entertained the crowd by performing holiday carols. Many wore elf hats and reindeer ears. Local singer James Isabel performed his rendition of "God Bless the USA." A teen-age dance group performed a ballet on stage. Parks and recreation employees handed out candy canes, cookies and cider to the crowd. Santa Claus put in an appearance too, coming in one-horse open carriage.

Delia Garcia came with 35 3-to 5-year-old from the Rob Reiner pre-school in Perris. They sang "Jingle Bells" on stage.

"This is wonderful," Garcia said. "We are very excited to be here. We've been practicing for three weeks. It is a wonderful experience for our children to be able to sing in public. I am proud that the City invited us." Arane Pineda came to watch her 4-year-old daughter, Mia, sing on stage.

"It is totally awesome that the City of Perris is putting this program on for our kids," she said. "I feel very appreciative to be here and participate. I am very proud of this City."

Margaret Briggs, principal and music director at Good Hope Elementary School, voiced similar sentiments. Her chorale group included 25 fourth through sixth graders.

"This is probably one of the most positive community events of the year," Briggs said. "It's a wonderful time for the community to come together. I want to express my thanks to the wonderful leadership in the City of Perris for working to uplift the community."

The largest contingent -- 120 strong -- came from the California Military Institute. The sang "Deck the Halls" to a cheering audience.

"It was fun to sing in front of a big audience that included our parents," said Izaiah Christopher, 13, a seventh-grader at CMI. "Everyone was encouraging."

Ilima Pacheco, 13, said she liked the sense of community that the tree-lighting created.

"We get to be here with our friends to laugh and sing," she said. "It's good because everybody gets to celebrate."

Mayor Pro-Tem Rogers said she was delighted so many Perris residents attended. The 2009 event was marked by cold and windy conditions that kept some people home.

"It is great to see all these people here to celebrate the spirit of Christmas," she said. "It shows community pride, community strength."

Evans said of the annual tree lighting: "It's the greatest. I wait every year for it."



Jolly Old St. Nick put in appearance at the Perris Christmas tree-lighting ceremony as well.



Perris Mayor Daryl Busch enjoys a laugh with Perris Public Safety Commissioner Shawn Haughney.