



## Perris News

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### Black History Month Carnival and Parade: Soaring Beyond the Limits

Organizers of the upcoming 2009 Black History Month Parade in Perris say this year's version of the event is particularly significant.

Not only does it toll the election and inauguration of the country's first black president. This year marks the 100th birthday of the NAACP, the civil rights group on the front lines in the fight for equality.

"We are living in momentous times," said Perris City Councilwoman Rita Rogers, who served as grand marshal of last year's parade. "It is a wonderful time for the African-American community to reflect upon the progress we have made and celebrate the milestones we have achieved."

The City of Perris, the African-American History Month Committee and the Perris Valley Arts and Activities community group will present the 8th annual Black History Month Parade on Feb. 28. The theme for this year's event is "Soaring Beyond the Limits."

Organizers expect the event to draw between 60 and 70 floats, marching bands, classic cars, church groups, equestrian and military units, motorcycles and dance and drill teams.

The parade and celebration begins at 10 a.m. at Perris High School, Perris Boulevard and Nuevo Road and ends near the City Hall Campus at Perris and San Jacinto Avenue. Afterwards, a Black History Month Expo takes place at Foss Field Park, featuring art, food and the awards ceremony for the parade's best entries.

A carnival will be held in conjunction with the parade. The carnival begins on Thursday, Feb. 26, and continues until March 1.

Longtime Perris Valley educator and Perris Elementary School District trustee Virniecia Green-Jordan has been named grand marshal for the upcoming parade.

Bobby Johnson, a member of the Perris Valley African American History Month Committee, which is helping to organize the parade, said the City has cooperated extensively with community volunteers. It's nothing new for Perris, said Johnson, who moved to the City in 1990 from Pasadena.

"Even today, I am still able to walk into City Hall and talk to the Mayor and City Council members on a first-name basis," Johnson said. "I like that about Perris."

Johnson said the election of Obama has shattered barriers for African-Americans, young and old, rich and poor.

"When I was growing up I heard that I would never live to see the day when a black would be elected president," he said. "It's here. I know I'll live to see a woman, a Hispanic and an Asian-American elected too. There's no limit. That's exciting to me."

Johnson said a planned job faire for youths had to be postponed until the economy picks up. He said he's planning to reschedule the event for sometime this summer.

"In many cities, it is hard for a community-based organization to take on such a role," he said. "In Perris, we are encouraged to do so. We've always been welcomed with open arms."

City officials will ride the parade route in classic vehicles. Councilwoman Joanne Evans said she has been taking part in every one of the previous parades.

"I think it's great to let people know about their accomplishments," she said. "If they have a special day to celebrate them, so much the better."

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Close this Page

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