

## Perris News

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### P-Town Combat Sports Academy Opens in Perris



Perris Mayor Daryl Busch and Councilwoman Rita Rogers applaud at Saturday's ribbon-cutting ceremony, which drew more than 200 people

Perris officials cut the ribbon Saturday on a boxing club that pugilists and mixed-martial arts enthusiasts say will train aspiring amateur fighters from around Southern California and make the City a major player in the boxing game.

Mayor Daryl Busch and City Councilwoman Rita Rogers were among those who cut the ribbon on the P-Town Combat Sports Academy on Indian Avenue in the Perris' north end. The City is working with volunteer coaches and trainers, providing lease assistance to help the gym get off the ground.

"I spent many hours at Madison Square Garden in New York and always enjoyed myself," Rogers said.

"I am pleased the City is able to help make this boxing gym a reality."

Busch noted that the ground-breaking at the boxing club took place just days after Perris opened its first free skate board park, a facility already heavily used by youngsters and young adults.

"We are committed to providing recreational activities to our community," Busch said.

About 250 people attended the ribbon cutting, including aspiring boxers and former world champions. The gymnasium already boasts and boxing ring, speed bags and heavy bags and areas to jump rope and shadowbox.

Work to complete the club by adding lights and restrooms hopefully will be finished by summer, said Andre Mitchell, a Los Angeles police officer and Perris resident who spent more than two years working on the gym. Mitchell said he expects more than 300 children and young adults, ages 7 to 21, to begin working out at P-Town. Many are at-risk youths from single-parent families or who face academic challenges. The purpose of the club is to harness their energy into a positive outlet and keep them from becoming part of the criminal justice system. Mitchell said gym supporters plan to hold boxing tournaments in Perris.

The academy initially will offer training in boxing, mixed-martial arts and wrestling, Mitchell said. Eventually, he would like add aerobics classes for students not into fisticuffs.

"This is a big day," Mitchell said. "All the hard work we have put in has paid off. But none of this would have happened without the support of the City of Perris. The City saw the dream and helped make it happen."

City Councilman Al Landers, a longtime boxing fan, said Perris residents have "real talent" for the sport. The City has sent boxers to state and national competitions where they have fared well, he said. There also are expert trainers and coaches in the City.

"This gym will go over big-time," Landers said. "The turnout proves that there is a great need for this type of facility in Perris and that it has been well received. The City has embarked on a public-private partnership to make the gym a reality. I am proud to be affiliated with this great addition to Perris."

Several aspiring boxers attended the ribbon cutting to put on exhibitions. Karlie Valenzuela, 14, came to hit the punching bags. Having a hometown gym, she said, is a "great advantage" for Perris kids training to box.

"It's a good opportunity for Perris teen-agers," she said.

Heritage High School student Eric Ramirez, 16, said he's been waiting nine years for Perris to open a boxing gym. He trained in San Diego, traveling more than 100 miles roundtrip to work out there.

"This is really great," said Eric, a future welterweight.

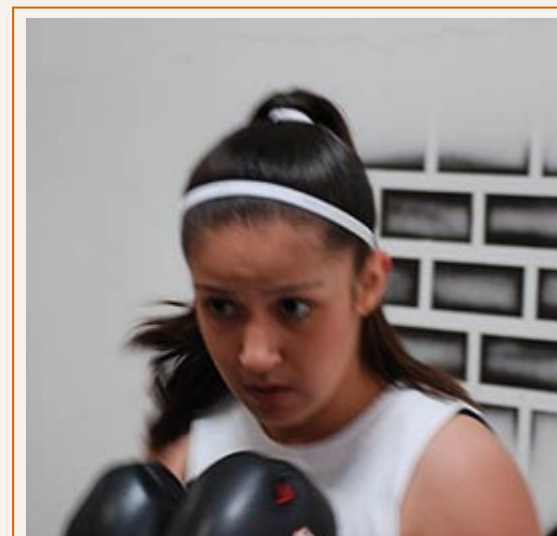
Eric and his dad, Pete Ramirez, sparred in the ring as part of demonstration of the Sweet Science. Dad was all smiles.

"The City will be proud of us," he said. "They made the right choice."

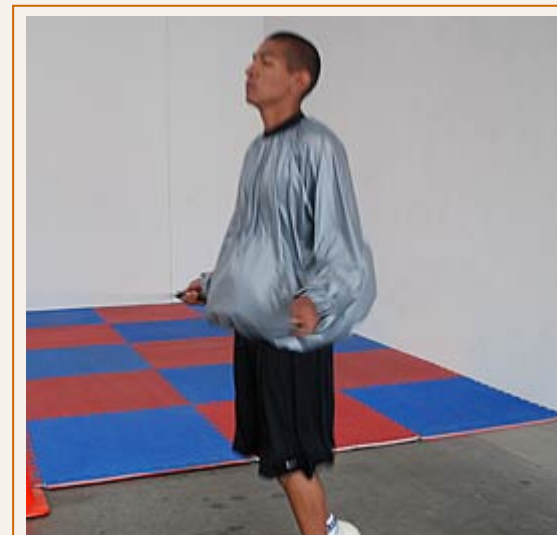
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Perris resident Andre Mitchell worked with the City for more than two years to bring the P-Town Combat Sports Academy to fruition.



Karlie Valenzuela is a study in concentration as she hits the punching bag during a workout at the P-Town Combat Sports Academy.



Eric Ramirez, 16, skips rope as part of a demonstration at the ribbon-cutting ceremony.