



## Perris News

Contact: Joe Vargo, Perris Public Information Officer  
Phone: 951-956-2120  
[jvargo@cityofperris.org](mailto:jvargo@cityofperris.org)

### Perris Relay for Life Raises Funds for Cancer Research



The City of Perris team helped raise \$3,000 for cancer research and treatments.

They walked for their moms and dads and sweethearts, for their children and friends, for themselves and for strangers. People turned out in droves for Perris' annual "Relay For Life," the annual walk to raise funds for research and treatment of cancer.

City employees, relatives and friends walked the route at Foss Park, raising more than \$3,000 alone in the process. The Relay for Life includes a 24-hour walking marathon, numerous testimonials from cancer survivors and the haunting lighting of "luminaries," candles inside paper bags with the names of cancer victims and remembrances from their loved ones.

Survivors, dressed in purple t-shirts, completed the first lap around the course.

"I'm here because I need to be reminded of how grateful I should be...and how grateful I am," said Associate Planner Diane Sbardellati, an eight-year cancer survivor.



Cancer survivors in purple t-shirts kicked off the annual Relay for Life in Perris, completing the first lap around Foss Field.



Survivor Michael Smalley: "When you hear the word cancer, your brain goes flat."

Sbardellati underwent a lumpectomy and radiation treatments for breast cancer in 2001. She said she never forget the news of the day on her last treatment. It was Sept. 11, 2001. She said she was heartened to see the crowd supporting cancer victims and raising money to fight the disease, especially during such a tough economy.

Organizers took time out to thank the major players who've led fund-raising efforts. Perris Auto Speedway promoter Don Kazarian received the corporate award. For years, Kazarian has pledged \$10,000 annually to the relay and the racetrack routinely provides more.

Perris resident Diane Veit said she walked in memory of her husband, a firefighter who contracted cancer while working on the job. Mike Veit was diagnosed with colon cancer at age 38, and the disease spread to his liver and bones. He died at age 40.

Mike Veit died on the very morning he was set to take part in the opening ceremony in the Relay for Life event in 2004.

"The pain never goes away," Diane Veit said.

Michael Smalley, 48, came to honor his father, Donald, who died of cancer, and his brother, Mitch, who is a 16-year survivor of testicular cancer. And he walked for himself too. Michael Smalley was diagnosed with testicular cancer five days after his brother.

"When you hear the word cancer, your brain goes flat," Smalley said. "You don't hear anything else." Smalley said the American Cancer Society helped provide gas money so he could get to post-surgery follow up appointments and treatments.

"You just can't believe how many lives cancer touches," Smalley said.

Perris City officials said they were honored to host the event. Mayor Daryl Busch noted that cancer strikes all age and ethnic groups and "people in all stages of life."

"We've got to do everything we can to stop this terrible disease," Busch said. "This is a great event. The City is proud to be a sponsor and will do everything it can to make this a success."

City Councilwoman Joanne Evans, a former firefighter, said several of her colleagues succumbed to cancer, which makes fighting the disease a personal battle.

"It's scary," she said. "We have to defeat it."

City Manager Richard Belmudez thanked all the volunteers who came out.

"The City is happy to be part of this important event," he said. Michael Morales, Capital Improvements Project Manager, once again organized the City's team and worked with volunteers from other agencies to provide logistical support for the relay.

Other City employees and supporters of the Perris relay squad included Susan Almanza, Efren Benites, Lynn Buchanan, Allan Cheng, Teresa Scura, Joe Camarillo, Jasce Goldsmith, Maria Mathey, Melissa Ochoa, Andrué Ordonez, Robert Ortega, Nathalie Osborn, Nicholas Sbardellati, Stephanie Tehseldar, Denisha Zapanta and Nathalie Zapanta.



Perris Associate Planner Diane Sbardellati walks to show her gratitude.



The glow from luminaries cast a haunting glow on the night sky.

[See a Video from the Event](#)