



## Perris News

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### March for Babies Plans in Place

The work to make Perris' Oct. 17 March for Babies Relay a success is progressing well.

Organizers expect up to 15 teams to take part in the fundraiser to prevent premature birth and its associated complications. A meeting of team captains this week took place to iron out and potential problems and finalize plans for the first-ever event in Perris, which takes place at the City Hall Campus.

"Things are going great," said City Councilwoman Rita Rogers, Division Director of the March of Dimes and the person organizing the March for Babies Relay. "Everyone is actively engaged and understands the mission, which is to help save babies."

Teams from the City of Perris, local churches and schools, and some businesses will take part in the Relay. Participants will walk around a track at Foss Field Park. They will walk to cheer those babies who survived premature birth and remember those who did not. But it's not a downer day. Families are encouraged to attend, to bring beach chairs and ice chests with food and soft drinks.

City Councilman Al Landers, owner of Preferred Realty, said at least 15 of his employees will be walking in the relay. He said he can think of few causes more important.

"We can help a lot of babies have better lives," he said.

Matthew Sharp, a team captain from First Baptist Church, called the City's March for Babies Relay a "tremendous event," one in which he is pleased to participate.

"This is a great chance for everyone to get out and help," Sharp said. "I am so pleased Perris is taking the lead on this important community activity."

Rogers said the 9-hour Relay for Babies fundraiser is a great chance to stamp out premature births and their related side effects while enjoying a great time with family and friends.

The length of the walking relay is symbolic in itself, Rogers said. One hour for every month of pregnancy.

"We just think it is so important to get the word out that so many birth defects and their associated illnesses and syndromes can be prevented by proper pre-natal care," Rogers said. "Perris has always been supportive of our efforts to help babies. We're expecting a great turn out for our Babies Relay."

Rogers said she expects more than 500 people to attend the upcoming Relay, which has a goal of raising \$30,000 for the March of Dimes.

Among the dignitaries scheduled to take part in the Relay is Sara Cowan, 3, who was born 13 weeks premature and survived through respiratory therapy developed by March of Dimes-funded research.

"We are saving lives," Rogers said.

Perris Mayor Daryl Busch will make remarks during the opening and closing ceremonies. Luminarias—candles placed in bags to honor healthy babies, survivors of premature birth and their families as well as infants who did not survive—will be lighted at the end of the day's events, creating a haunting glow over the field.

"We are eager to take part in this event," Busch said. "Birth defects and premature births affect a lot more children than you might think. We in Perris take pride in being a family-friendly community, and this event lets us celebrate those values."

Allyson Mallory, assistant principal of Good Hope Elementary School in the Perris Elementary School District, said educators want to take up the fight against birth defects.

"Babies grow up to go to kindergarten," Mallory said. "We want all our children to be healthy and happy, and have the best chance to excel in school and in life."

Cynthia Shain Smith, director of development for the California Chapter of the March of Dimes, said while the fundraiser is serious business, people who come to Foss Field should look forward to a great time. She expects teams to adopt individual theme—like Hawaiian or Superhero garb—to help pass the time. Bring a tent and some soft drinks, sandwiches and munchies, she advises.

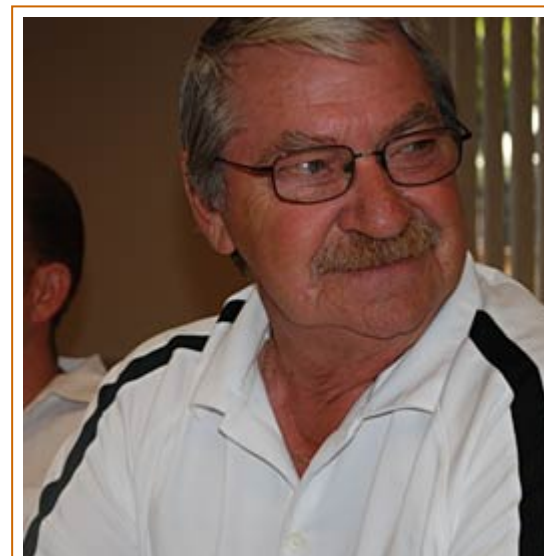
"There is nothing hard about this event," Smith said. "Take your time, have fun walking around the field. Hang out with the other teams. Enjoy the day. We want the day to reflect Perris' commitment and support for healthy babies." Her passion is personal.

Smith said her 23-year-old son was born 10 weeks premature with mild cerebral palsy. Although he is in college now and doing well, today infants born 10 weeks premature often suffer no birth defect, the result of technology, treatments and medications made available through March of Dime support.

Perris Team Captains meetings will take place prior to the Relay. They will be held at 5:30 p.m. on Sept. 23 and Oct. 7 in the Cesar Chavez Library Community Room. To register for the event, or to learn more about the March for Babies Relay, call 951-892-7922 or 1-888-4-BABIES or visit [www.marchforbabiesrelay.org](http://www.marchforbabiesrelay.org)



Perris City Councilwoman Rita Rogers, Division Chair of the March of Dimes, instructs team captains about collecting pledges during the upcoming March for Babies Relay on Oct. 17.



City Councilman Al Landers (right) and his assistant, Garrett Yarbrough, listen to the presentation during a meeting this week.