



Perris News

Contact: Joe Vargo, Perris Public Information Officer
Phone: 951-956-2120
jvargo@cityofperris.org

11th Annual Holiday Boat Parade Lights Up Lake Perris

More than 20 decked-out boats of all shapes and sizes took to the waters of Lake Perris for the 11th annual Holiday Boat Parade at the popular water recreation spot.

The City of Perris teamed up with the Perris Police Department to trim a pontoon boat normally used by law enforcement divers with 1,800 lights, wreaths, bells and ornaments for the big flotilla. The pontoon boat usually is dispatched for major incidents in Lake Perris, Lake Elsinore, Canyon Lake and the Colorado River.

Sgt. Tim Morin served as the unofficial captain of the vessel, ably assisted by Sgt. Rick Garcia, Deputy Ole Williams and his friend, Dottie Merki. All but Merki work for the Riverside County Sheriff's Department, which provides police services to the City under a contract with the agency. Perris Mayor Pro-Tem Mark Yarbrough completed the crew.

"This is a great idea," Morin said. "It's fun to get on the lake and have a good time."

Yarbrough said the City needs to continue its outreach efforts at community events like the boat parade to let the public know about its many great programs, businesses and opportunities.

"This demonstrates our commitment to interact with the community," he said. "This is a fun thing to do. This is Lake Perris. Why would we not be here? We need to keep ourselves in the public eye."

Boats came from as far away as Arcadia and it was apparent that the owners took a great deal of time to festoon with Santa Claus, reindeer, elves, penguins, cartoon characters, ornaments and sound systems that belted out Christmas tunes.

Jeff and Karen Hughes drove their 19-foot bass boat to Lake Perris to take part for the first time in the big boat parade. Neighbors gathered around their home as they wrapped strings of lights around their boat and topped it off with a Christmas tree.

"Once we decided to do it, we wanted to do it right," Jeff Hughes said. "It's fun to scope out the other boats on the lake."

Don Wilbanks brought his 20-foot boat, named "The Ice Princess" and decorated it with blue lights and snowflakes. Also accompanying him were his sons, Don Jr. and Steve, daughter-in-law Robin and twin grandkids, Makala and Justin, both 4.

"This lake is a great asset to this community and the entire region," Wilbanks said. "This is a family-oriented event. With the way the economy is going, we really need something like this."

Teacher Mike Sorter also brought out an entourage at Lake Perris. The group, which included his son and daughter and three of their friends, put up two trees, blow-ups of Santa Claus and Snoopy, candy canes and lots of lights on their 21-foot-pontoon, named "Snowflake."

"We love seeing all the people on the shore cheering as the boats go past," Mike Sorter said. "It puts us in the holiday spirit."

Winnie Wang, Melody Chiang and Hunter Chiang of Arcadia said they already go camping and enjoy fishing at Lake Perris. Getting their boat on the water during the annual holiday spectacle was just the next logical step. The decked out their boat with tinsel, garland and lots of Santa Clauses.

"This is a very nice place," Hunter Chiang said. "We like to come and visit here a lot."



Mayor Pro-Tem Yarbrough chats with members of the Wilbanks family prior to the big event.



The City's entry in the parade included Mayor Pro-Tem Mark Yarbrough, Deputy Ole Williams, Sgt. Tim Morin, Dottie Merki and Sgt. Rick Garcia.



A colorful boat takes its place in the flotilla during the annual Light Parade on Lake Perris.



A surfing Santa on parade.