



Perris News

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Annual Christmas Tree Lighting Draws a Festive Crowd



The Mayor with members of the Filipino choir.

More than 1,200 enthusiastic people came to Perris City Hall Friday to witness the annual Christmas tree lighting ceremony, the event that kicks off the City's holiday season.

Mayor Daryl Busch threw the switch that lighted the 40-foot tall tree, which drew a loud chorus of cheers from the audience.

"We hope everyone and their families have a Merry Christmas," Busch said. "We know times aren't the best right now, but we wish the best for everyone."

The event, the 22nd annual Tree Lighting Ceremony, also featured performances from local school children and civic groups. Old St. Nick put in an appearance, posing for the young and young at heart and taking orders for Wiis, Game Boys and other electronic toys. He handed out candy canes.

City Councilmember Al Landers and Joanne Evans also attended, as did City Manager Richard Belmudez, Deputy City Manager Darren Madkin and City Clerk Judy Haughney.

Landers said the large turnout reinforces his belief that despite the tough economy, Perris still retains a thriving community spirit.

"It is an honor and privilege to serve on the City Council at this time," Landers said. "I really believe we are in a position to help this City and its residents. There is a great hunger to see this City prosper. The vibrancy of our City is unbowed. The City Council has been forced to make some difficult decisions because of the budget and we know that they affect our staff and all our residents. Please know that these decisions have been made only after the most deliberate and thorough review."

Evans, who helped Santa as he took photos in a one-horse open carriage, said she wished everyone a wonderful holiday season and hoped "things will be more prosperous next year."

But she too was heartened by the big turnout.

"I think it is awesome," she said. "The tree-lighting ceremony opens a very special season of love and good will." Right after the tree lighted up, a line formed to see Santa Claus. The strains of Christmas carols filled the City Hall Campus. Freddy Flores came to the tree lighting with his nieces and nephew and cousin Teresa Mora. The kids visited Santa too. All agreed the evening was outstanding.

"This is something that makes you happy and feel good," Flores said. "It helps get you in the Christmas spirit. It reminds you that life is good."

Mora said she comes to the tree-lighting festivities every year.

"It's fun for the kids," she said. "Every year it gets a little better."

Karen Wade came to the tree-lighting with her 10-year-old son, Bradley.

She said she has lived in Perris more than 20 years and is amazed at how the City has grown, crime has fallen, new communities and businesses have moved in and how progress continues despite the economy. Major developments on the horizon include the construction of a new interchange at I-215 and Fourth Street set to begin in 2010, the opening of the Perris Transit Center in January and the rehabilitation of the historic Bank Building set for year's end.

"This is a great event to keep people up on what's happening in town," Karen Wade said. "Perris is a wonderful City."

I don't plan on leaving any time soon."

More than 30 members of the local Filipino community came to sing Christmas carols in their native language of Tagalog. Afterwards, Mayor Busch took a picture with the group.

"Christmas is a season of love and this is the best way we can show that we love living in Perris," said Agnes Narareno, one of the singers. "The City has been very supportive of us. It has made us feel welcome in our adopted country."



The star atop the City's 40-foot Christmas tree lit up the night. The 22nd annual tree-lighting ceremony drew more than 1,200 people.



Mayor Daryl Busch extends holiday greetings to the throng.



City Clerk Judy Haughney, City Manager Richard Belmudez, City Councilman Al Landers and Deputy City Manager Darren Madkin enjoy the festivities.



There were plenty of presents placed under the big tree.