



## Perris News

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### Thanks to Volunteers, Perris is Clean for Thomas the Tank Engine

With gloves and plastic trash bags, sweat and plenty of elbow grease, 40 volunteers began a massive cleanup in Perris alongside the route Thomas the Tank engine will travel when he comes to town in November.

The cleanup took place with the cooperation of the City of Perris and the Perris Rotary. They led the contingent of Rotarians, volunteers and students from Perris High School and Heritage High School who hit the ground early Saturday. The cleanup encompassed a four-mile stretch along the tracks from the Orange Empire Railway Museum to the historic Perris Depot.

The cleanup crew found all sorts of discarded refuse and trash. The cleared fields of scrap metal and marble, aprons, slippers, box springs and mattresses, golf balls, billiard balls, spark plug wires, wood scraps. One volunteer located an animal skull.

A Perris City bulldozer came along to remove unsightly tumbleweeds from alongside the track, which Thomas will run when he makes his annual trip to Perris on Nov. 8, 9, 11, 15 and 16th. CR@R provided Dumpsters.

Twins Aileen and Kimberly Sanchez, both Perris High School freshmen, earned community service hours while hanging out with their friends. They said they also were motivated by a sense of civic pride. "It's hard work," said Aileen, 14. "But it's nice to help clean up our community and make it look nicer." Kimberly Sanchez echoed those sentiments.

"It makes Perris look better," she said.

Rotarian Mark Howison said Thomas the Tank Engine attracts more than 30,000 railroad lovers and fans when he comes to town. The "Day Out With Thomas" festival is the largest fundraiser for the Orange Empire Railway Museum, one of California's largest museums of its kind. So it's important for Perris to look as good as possible, he said.

"It's very important to put our best foot forward," he said.

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Aileen Sanchez, 14, displays a plastic bottle she picked up during Saturday's cleanup while Valerie Seldura looks on.



Valerie Seldura, 14, a Perris High School freshman, picks up trash near B Street and Ellis Street as part of the cleanup in preparation for the annual visit of Thomas the Tank Engine.

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