



Perris News

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

City Spirit Shows at Annual Tree Lighting Ceremony

More than 1,000 Perris residents attended the annual tree lighting ceremony on Dec. 5 for a chance to see the City's magnificent holiday tree aglow, meet Santa Claus, ride a pony and hear Christmas carols performed by elementary and middle-school children.

City officials said the turnout vastly exceeded their expectations, and was four times larger than in 2007.

"This is overwhelming," said Mayor Pro-Tem Al Landers. "The spirit of our City is showing, even in this difficult economy."

The loud and boisterous crowd began gathering at Perris City Hall well before Mayor Daryl Busch and Riverside County Supervisor Marion Ashley threw the switch the lit the City's giant holiday tree to a rousing chorus of cheers.

Much of the lawn was packed with families eagerly awaiting the lighting of the big tree on the City campus.

The setting was perfect, the night air crisp but not cold. No hint of the rain that dampened the previous year's tree-lighting.

City staff put up light displays shaped like reindeer. Holiday packages helped adorn the City stage where the musical performances took place. If Old St. Nick couldn't arrive in a one-horse open sleigh, he did the next best thing. He came in a one-horse open carriage and greeted youngsters by the dozen.

"Merry Christmas," Ashley told the throng. "Enjoy the joy of Christmas. Enjoy your family. Make New Year's Resolutions. Improve your life."

Pavonne Cobb, her son, Marlon, and his friend, Damitre Moorer were among those waiting in line to visit

Santa. Marlon, 9, sported a long wish list of Christmas goodies—a dirt bike, roller blades, a PlayStation 3 and a Wii, among others.

"I'm an expensive kid," Marlon said.

Mom said she's proud the City put on the extravaganza. She and her family have attended several tree-lighting ceremonies.

"It's good to see the support from the community," she said. "People support this community." Temple Christian School sent 40 students to sing Christmas carols. The choir consisted of pre-schoolers to 9th graders. Practice for the tree-lighting concert began in September, said teacher Cathy Hickman.

"The students have been excited about it," Hickman said. "They've been talking about it for weeks." City Councilman Mark Yarbrough said the tree-lighting ceremony shows Perris is still a small town in some way with that down-home feel.

"We still maintain that small town sense of community," he said. "We do a lot of things for the residents. We haven't outgrown ourselves."



A youngster enjoys the holiday light display made up to look like a train.



Throngs of people came to the annual tree-lighting ceremony at Perris City Hall on Dec. 5



A kids choir belts out holiday favorites.

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