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'Garden of Courage' Opens at Victory Community Support Services



PERRIS, Calif. (May 24, 2019) -- The City of Perris dedicated its 15th "satellite community garden" at Victory Community Support Services on May 24, achieving another milestone in its efforts to bring healthy food choices and options to its residents.

"This is excellent for our residents and our children," said Mayor Michael Vargas, one of the dignitaries at the ribbon cutting. "It's a great program for the kids and helps teach them how to take a plant from seed to harvest and in the end is a beautiful result."

Perris Council Member Malcolm Corona, Assistant City Manager Isabel Carlos, Community Services Director Sabrina Chavez, representatives from Assembly Member Jose Medina's office of the 61st District and representatives from the office of Senator Richard Roth of the 31st district and City's Public Health team.

The short ceremony was live streamed from the City's Facebook page and featured speakers such as Perris Mayor Michael Vargas, regional Victor Community Support Services Director John DeVries, and Luis Rivas, who championed the garden for Victory Community Support Services. Even a few of the younger children who helped plant the garden said a few words, including a special invitation from Anthony Alvarez, 8, who gave a special invitation to Mayor Vargas for other future events.

"You can come back anytime you want, Mayor!" said Alvarez.

The 15th satellite garden at Victory Community Support Services marks an important milestone for Perris officials. After unveiling a community garden at the City Hall Campus, they have now reached the halfway point of their mission to establish 30 other gardens throughout the City.

Currently, there are more than 30 partners in the Grow Perris initiative, with the goal of building 30 gardens. The partners include representatives from all three school districts in Perris and other community organizations and leaders.

It was Rivas who reached out to the Perris staff and the Grow Perris team to begin the process of creating this garden and it was Rivas who received high praise as a "special type of person" from DeVries for going above and beyond his duty.

"Luis wasn't about just doing his job. Luis was about 'how can I help kids?'" said DeVries. "It's amazing that when you set an initiative toward something, the universe kind of rises to meet you."

Rivas applied for the Grow Perris Initiative and after an initial assessment by City staff, things began to move in the right direction.

Victory Community Support Services began working with the City in June 2018 and broke ground in February 2019. The garden took approximately three months to complete and more than 20 different volunteers from the community assisted in the construction of the garden. Staff and volunteers created a garden containing tomatoes, onions, bell peppers, romaine lettuce, radishes, fruit trees and various plants that attract pollinators.

"It's a great garden and our staff is getting better with each one they build. We are halfway there," said Perris Council Member Malcolm Corona. "It seems like the community will use it a great deal and will really enjoy it. It's good for promoting healthy eating as well."

The garden will teach children from Victory Community Support Services the benefits of healthy eating, proper water conservation and even patience as they wait for the seed to grow. Victory Community Support Services thanked the City for inspiring the staff to create the garden.

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