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Perris Honors Dedicated Volunteers at Awards Ceremony on April 5th



Perris Police volunteers post with law officers during the April 6 awards ceremony in which three volunteers were recognized. Riverside County Sheriff Stan Sniff, Citizens on Patrol Volunteer of the Year Salvador Hernandez, Perris Police Chief Greg Fellows, Mounted Posse Volunteer of the Year Kristy Ziemer and Station Volunteer of the Year Gary Long.

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They are the dedicated Perris residents, the men and women who answer the emergency calls in the pre-dawn darkness to help law enforcement secure crime scenes, direct traffic around major traffic wrecks, search for missing kids and adults, place barricades at flooded roads, support safety checkpoints.

Other times, Perris police volunteers perform more routine tasks, like driving squad cars and from scheduled service appointments, representing the department at community events and assisting in Spanish translation when needed.

The City of Perris and the Perris Police Department honored these dedicated volunteers April 5 with a dinner at the Senior Center, an event that also celebrated the 20th anniversary of the City's volunteer "Citizens on Patrol" force.

A trio of volunteers—Salvador Hernandez, Kristy Ziemer and Gary Long—took home awards for their service. Hernandez was honored as 2017 Citizens on Patrol Volunteer of the Year. Ziemer earned Mounted Posse Volunteer of the Year and Long took home Station Volunteer of the Year honors.

The awards ceremony drew Riverside County Sheriff Stan Sniff, Perris Police Chief Greg Fellows, Mayor Michael Vargas, City Councilwoman Tonya Burke and Rita Rogers and City Manager Richard Belmudez.

Vargas, a retired police officer, said Perris volunteers save the City huge amounts of money by performing duties that otherwise would be carried out by sworn cops.

"Their work is unglamorous and tedious but without their dedication, the City would have to reduce its paid police services," Vargas said. "It's important to acknowledge their contributions. It doesn't cost the City a cent but their contributions are invaluable."

Vargas presented keys to the City to original volunteers Par and Mike McAleavey and Shawn Haughney, who together have donated more than 10,000 hours of service to the community.

Small but mighty



Riverside County Sheriff Stan Sniff (second from left) with the three original volunteers from Perris Citizens on Patrol: Shawn Haughney, Pat McAleavey and Mike McAleavey.

Burke said the countless hours by the department's 40 volunteers help keep Perris safe. The volunteer teams includes the Citizens on Patrol who work the streets, the Mounted Posse contingent which assists in missing-person search and serves as the sheriff's Color Guard and In Station volunteers who process pawn tickets and other office duties.

"They are a small but mighty force," she said. "It's terrific that we are here tonight to celebrate our volunteers. They make sure our community remains safe. They put their lives on the line so we can sleep safe at night."

Rogers said of Perris police volunteers: "Every one of them is precious."

"They dedicate their time and talents to assist law-enforcement," she said. "It's always wonderful to recognize these incredible men and women."

Chief Fellows described the three attributes needed to volunteer: ability, willingness and qualifications.

"You represent this department on a daily basis and you put us in the best possible light," he said. "We hold you very close to our hearts. Your dedication is noble—to say the least."

Sheriff Sniff said that in a time of increasing dangers to law officers, citizen volunteers also face on-the-job hazards.

"Volunteers put themselves at risk," Sniff said. "You are playing a great role in keeping our communities safe. You are doing an outstanding job."

Seventeen years—and counting



Perris dignitaries at the April 5 award ceremony included (left): City Councilwoman Rita Rogers and City Manager Richard Belmudez. Right: City Councilwoman Tonya Burke, former Perris Police Chief Brandon Ford and Mayor Michael Vargas.

Salvador Hernandez beamed with pride as he talked about his duties as a Citizens on Patrol volunteer and what motivates him to continue the job. Hernandez, 64, works full-time delivering food to campuses in the Perris Elementary School District.

He's been a COP member for 17 years and estimates he's spent about 7,000 hours volunteering.

In December, while working an accident scene, a speeding car drove through police barricades and slammed into him, breaking two ribs. Months later, he's still sore.

Contemplating quitting? Not a chance.

"I like working with these folks," Hernandez said of his fellow volunteers. "They are like a family to me. It's a pleasure to work with them to keep the community safe. I still want to do this for a long time. It's beautiful to work in this job. It's an honor."

Hernandez had little time to savor his award. Two days later, he was back on patrol.

Residents interested in volunteering at the Perris Police Department can pick up an application at Police Headquarters, 137 North Perris Blvd.

Perris Police Volunteers service in 2017

Hours: 1,764.5

Callouts: 24

Callout incidents: Crime scene preservation, traffic control at fatal accident, missing person searches

Observed: 9 suspected intoxicated drivers reported to police; 8 arrested; one determined to have medical issues; 17 people in assistance of medical aid; four vehicle fires, four brush fires, three structure fires

Other contributions: Driving police vehicles to and from required maintenance appointments, processing pawn slips, assisting with Spanish translations

Community events: Perris Health Fair, National Night Out, Shop with a Cop, Fun Run, Rod & Rails Festival, Summer Splash, Halloween Festival, Veterans and Christmas parades and City Tree Lighting.



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