



home > city hall > press releases

## Annual TODEC Multi-Cultural Festival Draws Large Crowd



Colorfully dressed "Charros" process to an open-air Mass Sept. 23 during the annual Multicultural Festival in the City of Perris.

The annual Perris multi-cultural festival offered something for everyone—great dancing, singing and other entertainment, a variety of tasty ethnic food offerings, the appearance of a pair of representatives from the sister city in Michoacan along with 30 "Charros," colorfully dressed cowboys and their exquisitely trained horses.

The festival also presented the opportunity to celebrate the work of Luz Maria and Antonio Ayala, who 34 years ago established TODEC (Training Occupational Development Educating Communities) as a way to provide educational and job opportunities for immigrants while helping them complete citizenship classes and become U.S. citizens.

Congressman Mark Takano (D-Riverside) topped the list of dignitaries taking part in the Sept. 23 festival. City representatives included Mayor Michael Vargas, Mayor Pro-Tem Malcolm Corona and City Manager Richard Belmont.

Also on hand were Riverside County Sheriff Stan Sniff, representatives of State Senator Richard Roth, Assemblyman Jose Medina and Salomon Rosas, Head Consul of the Mexican Consulate in San Bernardino.

"I am so proud of the great work TODEC has contributed to the City of Perris," Takano said. "It has helped so many immigrants adjust to life in our communities. It is highly appropriate that the multicultural festival celebrate the work of TODEC. The core of being in America is to know that no matter where you come from, you have the opportunity to contribute and thrive. That's what makes this country very special."



Fr. Jose Orozco blesses a Charro's horse during the Perris Multicultural Festival.

Luz Gallegos, TODEC Community Program Director and the daughter of the Ayalas, said she is proud that the organization has helped more than 100,000 immigrants become naturalized Americans. Perris is nearly 75 percent Hispanic, she said.

The multicultural festival recognizes contributions and honors cultures from Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Columbia, Honduras and other countries.

"We are very proud of the City of Perris for its support of Latino and immigrant communities," Gallegos said.

### Blessing the Charros, celebrating diversity



Perris Mayor Michael Vargas chats with Luz Gallegos, Community Program Director of TODEC, which provides a variety of services to immigrants in the City.

The day began with an open-air Mass attended by hundreds of people at Foss Field Park. The procession included people dressed in Aztec garb performing dances dating back a millennium. Other worshippers carried an image of the Virgin of Guadalupe, Patron Saint of the Americas.

The Charros—traditional horsemen from Mexico known for their colorful clothing and well-trained and gorgeously groomed horses—attended the service. As Fr. Jose Orozco called the Charros forward to bless the horses, some put their animals through high-stepping and prancing routines. Orozco also called upon the faithful to "reject selfishness, put others first and be humble and generous."

Mayor Vargas said the City's multicultural festival reflects its commitment to honoring diversity.

"It shows our respect for all cultures," he said. "TODEC does a lot of great things for our City. Perris is a very diverse community and this is quite a festival."



Perris Mayor Pro-Tem Malcolm Corona (left) with Perris Police Lt. Mike Portillo and Chief Greg Fellows at the Sept. 23 Multicultural Festival in the City.

Mayor Pro-Tem Corona called the multicultural festival "a great representation of our City."

"Anytime we can celebrate different cultures in Perris is a great time," he said. "Diversity is a good and beneficial thing for any community."

### Sharing traditions, history

Rosas said the San Bernardino Consulate is partnering with Cal State University, San Bernardino, and businesses to provide education and employment opportunities for immigrant students and workers.



Roberto Valdivinos Torres and Luis Javier Figueroa, administrators in the Michoacan City of Cotija (Perris' sister city) with Antonio and Luz Maria Ayala, founders of the immigrant support group TODEC. Torres and Figueroa traveled to Perris to take part in the annual Multicultural Festival in Sept. 23.

He said 87 university students are participating in a program to learn about contemporary Hispanic heritage by spending six weeks studying throughout Mexico. The education includes visits to museums and ancient pyramids and spending time with relatives some students have never met.

"It's about reconnecting with their roots and relatives," Rosas said.

On the employment front, Rosas said the Consulate is partnering with businesses like Amazon, Target and Cardenas markets to assist immigrants as they seek jobs.

"We can send the message that we are working together with all our allies," he said. "One of our principle goals is to improve the quality of life for our community."



Perris Mayor Michael Vargas with U.S. Rep. Mark Takano (D-Riverside) at the Multicultural Festival. Takano praised Perris officials for welcoming immigrants into the City.

### Building communities

Enrique Murillo, an education professor at Cal State San Bernardino, said Perris has helped create stable communities of immigrants within the City, some that have thrived more than 40 years. Those hard-working community members, Murillo believes, have created a City on the ascent.

"Perris is an up and coming community," he said.

A pair of administrators from Perris' sister city—Cotija in the Mexican state of Michoacan—attended the multicultural festival and spent the day taking in the festivities. Social services director Roberto Valdivinos Torres and planning director Luis Javier Figueroa said Perris is well-known in their hometown. Many families have immigrated to Perris and surrounding communities, which they feel have made them welcome.



Folklorico dancers highlighted the celebration at the Sept. 23 Multicultural Festival.

Torres said he was most impressed with the religious service and the blessing of the Charros and their horses, something he has never before witness. Both said they enjoyed their experience in Perris.

"A town without culture is a town without essence," Figueroa said. "Perris has culture."

The dignitaries issued an invitation to Perris representatives.

"The people of Cotija would be happy to have Perris residents visit us," Torres said.

### Media Contact

Joe Vargo  
Public Information Officer  
951-943-6100  
jvargo@cityofperris.org



Perris City Hall  
101 N. D Street  
Perris, CA 92570

Hours: Mon. - Fri. 8 am - 6pm

Phone: (951) 943-6100  
Map to City Hall • Contact us

Get our mobile apps:  
Apple • Android

Contact Perris  
Call: (951) 943-6100 (available 24 hours/day)

Report a Problem/Ask a Question:

Contact Form

Follow us: [Facebook] [Twitter] [Instagram]

### In this website

- City Hall
- Government
- Residents
- Business
- Visitors

Translate this site:  
Select Language