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Wednesday Walks for Seniors



Perris fitness instructor Laura Sosa (left) leads members of the Wednesday morning walking club around the City Hall Campus.

It's 10 a.m. on a Wednesday and the walkers are gearing up to hit the pavement.

Some carry canes, others amble slowly, affected by arthritis or work-related disabilities. Still more cope with diabetes, high cholesterol and balance issues. No matter. Come rain or shine, cloudy skies or sunny, brisk or warm conditions the seniors are there, waiting to stride their way to better health.

Welcome to the Wednesday Morning Walking Club.

Fitness instructor Laura Sousa leads the group from the Bob Glass Gymnasium around the City Hall Campus on walks from one to three miles.

The program is part of the City's ongoing commitment to improving the lives of its senior citizens. Other programs geared to seniors and near seniors include *Fit and Fab* and *Fit after 50*. The City of Perris also continues its Live Well Perris program, which includes workouts every Thursday at 6 p.m. at the City Hall Campus, 101 North D Street.

Sosa said the weekday walks often attract as many as 50 participants.

She's seen the improvement in their health since the walks began several months ago. Some seniors report shedding their walkers and canes and now move unaided.

"A little bit of exercise is a very good thing," Sosa said. "It helps with balance and flexibility, strength and endurance. The City of Perris cares about its seniors and has been doing a great job in creating programs to assist them."

Mayor Michael Vargas said senior fitness programs represent the sort of community engagement the City is proud to support.

"I'm very glad to see us providing programs that benefit the health of our residents," he said. "The walking program is great, it supports seniors in their efforts to improve their health."



Members of the Wednesday morning walking club give the "thumbs up" sign to show their support for the City of Perris-sponsored program.

Walking regular Sandra Fleming, 70, is a stroke and breast cancer survivor. She said she "jumps at the chance to get out of bed and walk." Fleming said her strength has improved significantly by taking Wednesday morning walks. She gave away her walker and now completes one, two and even three-mile walks weekly.

"I never want this program to go away," Fleming said. "The City of Perris is fantastic for creating this program. It shows they care about senior citizens. If they didn't care, they wouldn't offer it."

Sharon Brancato, 65, said many walkers socialize while they exercise. They talk about their children and grandchildren, places they've visited and activities they enjoy. Wednesday walks provide the opportunity, she says, to "socialize and get out of the house."

A 25-year resident of Perris, Brancato said she has seen the City's senior programs expand—and that makes her happy.

"Perris is very aware of the need to be healthier and to move more," she said.

At 53, Renee Henry is one of the youngest participants. She was disabled when she fell on the job and injured herself so badly she took a medical retirement. Walking helps keep her weight in check, she said, and "it makes me feel better about myself."

"I need to exercise," she said. "You've got to get out and do something to improve your health. When I walk, I feel good."

The Wednesday walking classes, *Fit after 50* and Thursday evening workouts are free. *Fit and Fab* classes are \$1. More information about those programs is available via the City's community newsletter, [On Track in Perris](#).

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