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Outgoing YAC Members Earn Medallions

The City of Perris honored 11 members of its Youth Advisory Committee for their outstanding contributions to the community, which include creating new programs for teenagers, volunteering hundreds of hours to enhance the quality of life in Perris and for serving as role models for their peers.

Perris Mayor Michael Vargas presented medallions to the outgoing YAC members who are college-bound in the fall.

Sara Cortés de Pavón, a staff liaison to the Youth Advisory Committee, said the teens' gung ho spirit and hard work makes for a better Perris.

"To say we are proud of our graduates would be an understatement," she said. "The time and level of commitment they have contributed to the YAC, and their community, exemplifies their attributes of authentic leadership. They are true agents of change. Their collective efforts have resulted in a stronger, productive and successful Youth Advisory Committee. We appreciate and thank them for their service and wish them the best as they continue on to college."

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Perris Mayor Michael Vargas (green jacket) with members of the Perris Youth Advisory Committee at the May 9 City Council meeting. YAC staff liaisons Sara Cortés de Pavón (far left) and Josh Estrada (far right) are also pictured.

The Youth Advisory Committee's accomplishments are many and varied.

The group has taken part in community clean-ups, clearing trash and debris from vacant lots. They have supported City parades and major municipal events like the annual Health Fair and Senior Prom. The group began an "open mic" night at the Teen Center, allowing high school students and young adults the chance to sing, play an instrument, read poetry or speak extemporaneously. They've also organized a distracted driving workshop, an anti-bullying symposium and kicked off a "coco-and cram" night for students preparing for semester final exams.

The YAC earned the 2016 Public Outreach Award from the American Planning Association for its "Photovoice Project," which required the committee members to capture in images areas of the City that needed improving.

YAC President Alexa Olivas, 17, will graduate from Rancho Verde High School and enter UC Irvine as a freshman in the fall, where she will study government. Upon receiving an undergraduate degree, Alexa plans to enroll in law school, with the ultimate goal of returning to Perris and helping the City thrive in the future.

"I want to give back to my community," Alexa said.

She said participating in the YAC provided her and fellow committee members with an array of skills, including public speaking, organization, how to dress professionally and effective strategies in communicating with adults.

"It's given teenagers a role in their community," she said.

The medallions presented to the YAC graduates will be worn as part of the regalia when they receive their diplomas in the coming weeks. Every member of the YAC who has served since its inception four years ago has gone on to a university.



Members of the Perris Youth Advisory pose for a photo outside of Perris City Hall May 9, when they were honored for the commitment and spirit of volunteerism on behalf of the City.

In addition to Alexa, the 2017 YAC graduates include:

- Chantal Loreda: Rancho Verde High School—University of California Riverside
- Gabriela Salazar: Rancho Verde High School—University of California Irvine
- Jenna Owens: Rancho Verde High School—University of Virginia
- Jorge Amezcua: Nuview Bridge Early College High School—California State University San Bernardino
- Leticia Vargas: Nuview Bridge Early College High School—University of California Riverside
- Taleyah Willett: Nuview Bridge Early College High School—Academy of Art University San Francisco
- Tanya Loreda: Perris High School—California State University San Marcos
- Thessa Guzman: Rancho Verde High School—California State University San Bernardino
- Viviana Pavón-Cortés: Temescal Canyon High School—Northern Arizona University
- Yajaira Velazquez: Nuview Bridge Early College High School—California Baptist University



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