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Senior Prom Brings Back Memories of the 70s

Perris residents 55 and older put on their dancing shoes and did their version of the Hustle during the 4th Annual Senior Prom, a celebration of the 1970s disco era.

More than 150 seniors hit the dance floor at the Bob Glass Gymnasium May 20, moving to the rhythms of Dock Rock-It, who belted out classic disco numbers made famous by KC and the Sunshine Band ("I'm Your Boogie Man"), Wild Cherry ("Play that Funky Music") and Marcia Griffiths ("Electric Slide") while also paying tribute to other 70s artists like Jim Croce, Bob Seger and Neil Diamond.

Perris Mayor Michael Vargas welcomed the seniors to the prom and was joined by three other members of the Perris City Council. Vargas said he was surprised at how many seniors danced the night away while enthusiastically swaying to the music.

"This is a great event for our seniors," he said. "Our seniors serve as role models for the community and it is important that they stay active. They want events like this."

Turning his attention to the seniors on the dance floor, Vargas said: "I can't keep up with you folks when it comes to dancing. You know how to party!"



Perris City Councilmembers Rita Rogers (left) and Malcolm Corona (right) pose for a photo with Prom King David Valdovinos, 76, and Queen Josefina "Bonita" Duran, 89, at the May 20 Senior Prom.

Mayor Pro Tem David Starr Rabb served dinner to the seniors, joining about 20 other volunteers to make the prom a success. Taking a break from his kitchen-related duties, Rabb told the audience "you guys make Perris a great place to live."

"I'm honored to serve on the City Council," he said.

City Councilmembers Malcolm Corona and Rita Rogers took part in the crowning of the prom king, David Valdovinos, 76, and queen, Josefina "Bonita" Duran, 89.

Corona said the Senior Prom allows parents, grandparents and great-grandparents to "socialize, enjoy themselves and show the community they have plenty of energy and spirit."

"Our City does a great job promoting events for children and families," he said. "But it's also important to show our senior population that we are interested in them and want them to continue to be involved in our community."

Rogers stayed the entire night.

"I feel blessed to be here and it is wonderful to see the seniors get their dance on!" Rogers said. "It's exciting to see our seniors stay fit and happy."



Perris Mayor Michael Vargas chats with Teresa Izaguirre, 65, and her husband, Jose Izaguirre, 69, during the May 20 Senior Prom at the Bob Glass Gymnasium.

Living well

The Senior Prom continues the City's Live Well Perris healthy eating, active living initiative. Live Well Perris boasts several program geared toward seniors. Those include "Fit and Fab" exercise classes, a "Walking Wednesday" class, line-dancing and Zumba.

Les and Darlene Steele take part in many City-sponsored activities through the Senior Center. Darlene Steele, 64, credits exercising with helping improve her strength and balance. She said, in recent years, she has advanced from a wheelchair to walker to cane and now uses knee braces to help get around.

"My doctor told me to exercise more," she said. "He told me exercise is better than medicine. We love living in the City of Perris. There's no place I'd rather be."

Les Steele, 65, said he and his wife have attended all four Senior Proms and wouldn't miss the event.

"It's the only time we get dressed up!" he said.

Beverly Hibbard, 71, came to the prom with her mom, Lena McFarlane, 94, who twice was crowned Prom Queen.

"It is wonderful that the City of Perris creates an event like this for its seniors," Hibbard said. "Perris takes care of its seniors."

McFarlane said limited mobility prevented her from taking to the dance floor.

"I will enjoy the dinner," she said.

Terry Simmons, 67, said memories of her high school prom in 1967 swept over her as she sat in the Bob Glass Gym. The Los Angeles High School class celebrated its prom at the International Hotel, where the melodious sounds of Marvin Gaye and Stevie Wonder filled the air. Simmons thanked the City and the Senior Center staff for creating a first-class event for Perris seniors.

"It means a lot to me," she said. The seniors in Perris are not forgotten. They are recognized as being an important part of the community—and that makes me feel greatly appreciated."



Perris Mayor Pro Tem David Starr Rabb and City Councilwoman Rita Rogers chat with former Prom King Sidney Lee, 89, during the 4th Annual Senior Prom at the Bob Glass Gymnasium.

Having more fun

Ofelia Gonzalez, 63, calls herself "the dancing queen," so the Senior Prom proved the perfect venue for her to strut her stuff. Like other seniors, Gonzalez avails herself of the numerous activities provided by the City—from fitness to dancing to the prom.

"Seniors in Perris are not left behind," Gonzalez said. "I'm happy the City takes seniors into consideration when planning its events. It's my time right now. I'm having more fun now than when I was younger."

Jose Izaguirre, 69, and his wife, Teresa, 65, hit the dance floor early and often. The couple has attended all four senior proms and were among the first people to put on their dancing shoes and salsa. The couple said they enjoyed the music, the food, the mood and the City's commitment to creating a special night for them and their peers.

"The City always treats us good," Jose Izaguirre said.

Teresa Izaguirre said the prom was a trip down memory lane.

"I remember this music when I was young," she said. "It makes me feel young again."



Seniors hit the dance floor during the May 20 Senior Prom in Perris.

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