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## Community Stretches Together at Yoga in the Garden

Fitness through yoga.

The latest addition to the City of Perris' Live Well health initiative includes one-hour yoga sessions conducted in the community garden on the City Hall Campus.

Led by Perris Program Assistant Maria Marquez, the most recent session August 7 drew 20 children and adults who went through a series of yoga poses with names like cobra, half-moon, rise up, chaturanga, rise up warrior and happy baby pose.

Marquez, a certified yoga instructor, said it makes perfect sense to offer the exercise classes at the Perris Green City Farm Program, the official name of the community garden.

"I believe people should try to live a healthy lifestyle and yoga can help with that," Marquez said. "Yoga does help you get stronger but it's not a high-intensity workout. You gain strength through poses and meditation.

Yoga in the Garden continues Live Well Perris's healthy-eating, active living theme. The community garden also includes regular cooking lessons conducted by a professional chef and diabetes cooking lessons from healthcare professionals.

At the end of every type of class, Perris Green City Program representatives handed out freshly harvested produce—participants this week received peppers, cucumbers, eggplant, tomatoes, zucchini and watermelon.



Perris Program Assistant Maria Marquez leads her class through a series of yoga poses at the Perris Green City Farm Program, site of the community garden. About 20 people attended a recent session.

### Beginners and regulars

The recent session included first-timers and residents who've been to all Yoga in the Garden sessions, which began earlier this summer. While soothing music played in the background, Marquez led the class through a series of poses and stretches interspersed with brief resting periods.

She told the class they might feel discomfort during their workout. There's a difference between discomfort and pain. Discomfort sometimes involves muscles straining, tightening. Pain is pain. Relax and rest if you feel pain, Marquez advises her students.

Chelsea Gates and her boyfriend, Lucas Gallardo, are regulars at Marquez's yoga classes. They give high praise to the lessons, the location and the instructor. Gates described the sessions as "strenuous but not exhausting."

"I appreciate the City of Perris organizing events like this," Gates said. "It allows me to be around like-minded people. I've been here since the first class and I look forward to coming back again and again. It's very meditative."

Gallardo said that in addition to the yoga classes, he enjoys taking part in the regular "Chef in the Garden" cooking demonstrations, practical lessons in making healthy meals and snacks. Gallardo says both programs serve a common purpose.

"They're about trying to serve the community to make Perris a healthier City," Gallardo said.

Gallardo said his spirits were lifting as he rolled up his yoga mat and prepared to head home at the conclusion of this week's lesson. They always do.

"It's very peaceful," he said. "It relaxes me and makes me feel more energized and refreshed. Every time I leave here I'm in a great mood."

The next yoga lesson takes place Aug. 28 from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. at the community garden, 101 North D Street.



Perris residents Chelsea Gates and Lucas Gallardo (nearest to camera) say they look forward to the yoga lessons conducted in the community garden.

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