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Perris Residents Enjoy National Night Out



Perris Mayor Michael Vargas receives a Certificate of Recognition from members of the Perris Police Department during the annual National Night Out Aug. 19 at Skydive Park.

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The chance to meet and talk to cops in a relaxed, tense-free atmosphere. The opportunity to see the latest crime-fighting gear up close, to witness firefighters demonstrating the life-saving equipment they use to free people trapped inside wrecked cars and to observe the close working relationship between a canine officer and his four-legged partner.

Those were some of the reasons worth taking in the annual "National Night Out" August 19 at Skydive Park in Perris, an event that drew hundreds of people.

Perris Mayor Michael Vargas and City Councilman Malcolm Corona attended the festivities.

"This is a great day to show all our residents what police and public safety representatives do to keep us safe," Vargas said. "It's a great opportunity for the public to ask law enforcement about its policies and procedures, because that's something the average resident doesn't know about. It's very important to build a bridge between the community and law enforcement and this event is a great opportunity to do just that."

Vargas, a retired police officer, said public safety remains Perris' top priority. The Mayor accepted an award from Perris Police in recognition for the City's support for law-enforcement and public safety.

Corona attended with his wife and son, Malcolm, 2. A highlight for the City Councilman was sticking a paramedic badge on the youngster following a visit to an ambulance on display.

"This is a great event with a great turnout and a lot of information available," Corona said. "It helps keep the community informed about what law enforcement does to protect us."

Corona urged residents to check out information about Neighborhood Watch and other crime-prevention programs. He said Perris elected representatives know residents demand a safe city and that he and his colleagues are committed to maintaining robust law-enforcement levels.

"It is important for our residents to know that we're always trying to improve our community," he said. "We are definitely listening to our residents. Any crime in our City affects us all!"



Perris City Councilman Malcolm Corona attaches a paramedic badge to his son Malcolm's shirt during the National Night Out in Perris.

Choppers, armored vehicles, boats and bikes

A wide variety of public-safety equipment was on display at Skydive Park. Visitors posed for pictures in front of a police helicopter, off-road motorcycles, an armored vehicle employed for high-risk callouts and a specialized "TriToon" boat employed for underwater searches. Members of the Mounted Posse ambled through the park, often stopping to chat with visitors and stop for a quick photo. An all-female band provided musical entertainment throughout the event.

The Riverside County Sheriff Department's armored "Bearcat" vehicle, employed by SWAT officers during hostage and barricaded suspect emergencies and when cops serve high-risk search warrants for armed suspects. Deputy Chris Brown answered a steady stream of questions about the Bearcat, which is armored front-to-back and can stop .50-caliber projectiles.

Brown said SWAT officers train weekly to maintain their edge. Equipment like the Bearcat helps ensure they come home safely.

"It's an insurance policy," he said. "Certain situations require certain tools. We prepare for things we hope we never have to encounter."

Deputies from the Riverside County Off-Highway Vehicle Enforcement team brought their KTM 450EXC motorcycles used to track down illegal off-roaders. The bikes are perfect for navigating the hills and dirt roads that make Riverside County a world-wide attraction for illegal riding. Members of the team have nabbed riders from France, Germany, Canada and Sweden, all drawn by the topography that makes large parts of the county ideal for motocross enthusiasts.

The county's aviation unit brought its Airbus H-12, a rugged and durable helicopter that has seen service in more than 120 countries around the world. The department's aviation unit's duties include airborne patrol, missing person searches and rescue operations.

Sgt. Chris Mattson, a member of the county's dive team, said team members are all certified divers and trained to work in water up to 135 feet deep. The team responds to reports of missing swimmers and boaters as well as searching for evidence in criminal investigations, making use of side-scan sonar and remotely operated vehicles to search lake bottoms for evidence. They work in Lake Perris and other lakes in Southern California. The unit is based in Perris.

Mattson said events like National Night Out shows the public "the different options and capabilities we have to assist the community." It's also the chance for the public to meet law enforcement and see that "we are just people doing a job," Mattson said.

Canine, cut-and-rescue demos

National Night Out also included a police dog working with his handler to extract an uncooperative suspect from a car. Kobus, a Belgian Malinois, made quick work out of pulling Deputy Tim Quick, who played the bad guy, out of a car while handler Brent Cisneros looked on.

That was followed by a demonstration by firefighters from Station 90 in Perris, who used a tool known as "the jaws of life" to cut open a crunched vehicle, simulating how they safely remove victims trapped inside cars badly damaged in serious wrecks. Later, the firefighters posed for photos with kids and families.



Deputies from the Riverside County Off Highway Vehicle Enforcement team brought their KTM 450EXC motorcycles used to track down illegal off-roaders

Volunteer support

A dozen police Explorers from the Perris Post 522 volunteered at Skydive Park, assisting with parking, answering questions from the public and keeping the park clean. Perris Explorers recently competed against other posts throughout the county in the annual "ExCon" competition, where they once again snagged several awards for excellence in training scenarios that included crime-scene preservation, officer-down rescue and traffic stops. Post 522 members also completed a week-long "Explorers Academy" at the Ben Clark Training Center.

Post advisor Roger Owen, a Perris cop, called the Explorers "amazing young people who want to do anything and everything to help their City."



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