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Perris Chamber of Commerce Holds Annual Installation

A newly invigorated Perris Valley Chamber of Commerce has doubled its membership in recent years, has started an outreach program to high-school students and is paying an incentive to teen-agers who earn monthly academic honors.

The Chamber of Commerce held its 105th annual installation of officers Feb. 18 Harrison Hall, an event that drew dozens of local business owners, vendors, elected officials and other dignitaries. Perris Mayor Daryl Busch, Mayor Pro-Tem Rita Rogers, City Councilman Mark Yarbrough, Police Chief Brandon Ford and Riverside County Supervisor Marion Ashley led the local contingent of VIPs.

Incoming chamber president Matt Johnson said he's excited to helm a community-based group that's growing and spreading the news that Perris is a great place to start or expand a business. Johnson, who owns Wrens Ranch Sportsman's Park, boasts deep ties to Perris.

His grandfather, Burton Casner, operated a gasoline station at Fourth and A streets beginning in 1928.

"I'm excited for the chance to make a difference in the town I grew up in," Johnson said. "We want to work with existing businesses to keep those businesses and attract new businesses to town."

Johnson pointed out several areas of improvements with the Chamber of Commerce, which celebrates its 105th birthday in May. Those include:

- Increasing the membership from 100 to 200.
- Partnering with the Perris-based group TODEC, which seeks to expand voting, educational and employment for immigrants.
- Beginning a Jaycee's program to introduce high-school students to the realities and responsibilities of running a business.
- Offering \$50 payments to high-schoolers selected as Students of the Month.
- Establishing a new Passport to Perris program to market the 27 recreational, cultural and historical attractions and points of interest.

The key to future Chamber of Commerce success, he said, is a return to past values. The organization needs to strive to make its members feel like neighbors instead of merely as businesses. Neighborliness served Perris well during the years he spent as a child in the City. It can serve the same function today.

City officials said the mission of the Chamber mirrors the goals of the City—to put Perris on the map as a place where new businesses can put down roots and existing companies can expand.

"A vibrant Chamber of Commerce means a vibrant City," Busch said.



Perris Mayor Daryl Busch (left) and Riverside County Supervisor Marion Ashley (next to Busch) administer the oath of office to the new officers and members of the Perris Valley Chamber of Commerce.

Rogers served on the Chamber's board of directors in the 1990s and remains a staunch advocate.

"It's very important that the City takes a keen interest in supporting the Chamber of Commerce," Rogers said. "As elected officials, we have an obligation to do what we can to make businesses thrive as much as possible."

Yarbrough noted the City and Chamber "have been partners for more than 100 years" and have enjoyed a great relationship for more than a century.

"The City is important to the Chamber of Commerce and the Chamber of Commerce is important to the City," Yarbrough said.

Mayor Busch and Supervisor Ashley swore in the Chamber's new officers: Johnson, president; Ali Mazarei, vice-president; Rogelio Rawlins, treasurer and Jason Espinoza, secretary. Other board members include Wade Ford, Armando Hurtado, Tim Moore, Joshua Naggar and Dave Stewart.

Ashley called the current Perris Valley Chamber of Commerce "one of the most vibrant chambers in Riverside County in one of the county's most dynamic cities."

The following companies were honored during the 2016 installation dinner:

- Large Business of the Year: Riverside County Sheriff's Department
- Medium Business of the year: Optimus Building Corp.
- Small Business of the Year: Ace Tax and Realty
- Business of the Year: Action Star Games
- President's Choice: Smooth Transition
- Nonprofit Organization of the Year: Time is Creeping Up Productions, Inc.
- Partner in Education: Sizzler
- Perris Pride: Dave Stewart
- Board Member of the Year: Arco Travel Zone Center
- Ambassador of the Year: Sue Babe Marshall



Newly installed Chamber of Commerce President Matt Johnson points to a picture of his grandfather who operated a service station in the City in the 1920s.

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