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Perris Fun Run Sets a Lively Pace



Runners and walkers take off from the starting line at the 5-kilometer Fun Run, part of the City's annual Health Fair. About 1,200 participants made the April 23 Fun Run an unqualified success.

Xavier Carranza lost the 5-K Perris Elementary School District "Fun Run" by one second in 2015.

He was determined to win this year's event.

He did, and by a lot.

The 15-year-old Perris High School track sophomore outclassed the field in the April 23 run through Perris, blistering the 5-kilometer course in a time of 16-minutes 17-seconds. He finished more than a minute ahead of his nearest rival, fellow Panther Edwin Valdin.

"I needed to avenge last year's loss," Xavier said as he cooled down from the run. "It was a lot of fun. The course was mostly downhill but there was a hill toward the end that proved challenging. It was a great time."

The course this year weaved its way from the Perris City Hall Campus through neighborhoods and major thoroughfares like Perris Boulevard before returning. Several runners said residents along the route cheered them on as they made their way through the route. The fastest runners train by running several miles each day as part of their work as members of high school track teams. So for them, the 3.1-mile course was a snap.

But other participants emphasized the "fun" in Fun Run. They walked the course with infants in strollers, grandkids at their side and pets on leashes.

The Fun Run kicked off a day of celebration in Perris, which included the annual Relay for Life to raise funds for the American Cancer Society. The day concluded with the City's Fourth Annual Health Fair, which featured a variety of health-screenings, tips on healthy cooking, exercise demonstrations, the unveiling of the new community garden and lots of raffles for bicycles and other prizes.

All three events are part of the ongoing Live Well Perris healthy eating active living initiative.



Xavier Carranza, 15, set a blistering pace that no one else was in sight as he prepares to cross the finish line at the April 23 Fun Run.

Mayor Daryl Busch welcomed the runners, strollers and walkers to the event, which drew an estimated 1,200 participants.

"It's a beautiful day for a 5-K run!" he said prior to the start. "Excitement is in the air and that's great for the students who are taking part in this run and the community. It's a wonderful activity. It's all about living well and it all goes together to make a better community. It's a wonderful day to be in Perris."

Perris Elementary School District superintendent Vince Ponce praised the collaboration with the City.

"We are so proud to team with the City on our Fun Run," Ponce said. "We get a chance to attend the health fair and learn all about the services the City has to offer. It's a great partnership."

Ponce said the school district has altered its cafeteria menu in the last year and now includes smoothies and salad bars as part of its lunch offerings, a result of the emphasis placed on healthy eating as part of Live Well Perris.



Fun Run winner Xavier Carranza and runner-up Edwin Valdin display their medals moments after completing the event.

Edwin Valdin, a 15-year-old Perris High School freshman, said he was pleased with runner-up but wished he could have finished in first.

"I feel good," he said. "I wanted to finish first but second is okay. It's better than all the other places!"

Benda Turner harbored no illusions about winning. For her, the Fun Run was getting out on a pleasant Saturday morning and walking her dog, Stella, an English Staffordshire mix who was rescued from the pound. A special education assistant at Good Hope Elementary School, Turner said she encourages her students to live healthy.

"I really appreciate the City of Perris organizing a community event for healthy fun," Turner said. "I encourage my students to live healthy so this is a great way of leading by example. I'm here to support my school, City and community."

Austin and Cathian Welch bring their children and grandchildren to the Fun Run—13 family members in all. Their reason is simple: "It's for the kids," Cathian Welch said.

"We support our community in any way we can," she said. "Perris put out excellent kids because of the effort of the community and the City Council. We could live anywhere we want but choose to live here!"



Youngsters too young to take part in the 5-kilometer event scamper off the starting line during the "Tot Trot" that kicked off the annual Fun Run.

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