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Perris Seniors Dance the Night Away at Annual Senior Prom



Perris Mayor Daryl Busch, Mayor Pro-Tem Rita Rogers and City Councilman took to the stage to honor prom queen Lena McFarlane, 94, and king William Rodriguez, 78, during the third annual Senior Prom May 20 at the Bob Glass Gymnasium.

A capacity crowd of almost 300 senior citizens danced the night away to the tunes of Elvis Presley, Buddy Holly, Chuck Berry, Bill Haley and the Comets and Jerry Lee Lewis during the 3rd Annual Senior Prom in Perris.

The May 21 prom took the seniors—who ranged from their 50s to 90s—back to a time when many were in high school and romanced their sweethearts to the tunes of the 1950s. But the May 21 event at the Bob Glass Gymnasium was more than just a chance to listen to the songs they remember from long ago.

It gave participants the chance to get out of their seats and hit the dance floor, continuing the City’s Live Well Perris healthy eating active living campaign.

Perris Mayor Daryl Busch welcomed the crowd, encouraging the audience to “get your exercise tonight.” This year marked the third annual Senior Prom, this one featuring a 1950s theme. Dinner, a red carpet and complimentary photographs also were included in the night’s festivities.

“We have a great turnout tonight and I know you will enjoy yourselves,” Busch said. “Our staff has outdone itself in decorating the gym and food is great. Enjoy yourselves.”

Mayor Pro-Tem Rita Rogers said events like the prom keep the City on pace “to make sure the needs of our seniors are met.” Other efforts include completion of a senior-apartment complex adjacent to City Hall, weekly exercise classes geared for those 55 and up and renovations to the Perris Senior Center.



Perris City Councilman David Starr Rabb helped serve dinner to about 300 people during the Senior Prom. He also addressed the audience, wishing everyone a grand time at the Senior Prom.

Feeling like celebrities

“The fun is that people can dress up, walk down a red carpet and feel like a real celebrity,” Rogers said. “I’m expecting our third prom to top the first two. It’s great to be able to relive your youth during a great event like this.”

Perris City Councilman David Starr Rabb was part of a team of 30 volunteers who prepared and served dinner, then cleaned up afterward.

As one of the youngest elected officials in California, Rabb said it “would be about another 25 years” before he met the age requirement. He noted that many of the seniors participating in the prom drove in from neighboring communities, allowing them to take in the improvements—new businesses, apartments, street improvements and upgrades to the City Hall Campus.

Rabb also liked it that the City has not forgotten those living out their golden years.

“I think it’s great that seniors get the chance to get out, enjoy themselves, dance and get some exercise,” he said. “Dancing is part of living well. It’s a great event.”

City Councilman Mark Yarbrough got into the spirit of the evening, donning a leather jacket with turned up collar, a white t-shirt and dark glasses—an outfit made popular by James Dean and other 50s icons. Yarbrough brought his wife, Shelly, to the festivities.

“This is a great investment for the City,” said Yarbrough, who spent a good portion of the night on the dance floor.

“People are having a great time. The seniors love it and they stay the whole night. More power to them! They burn a lot of calories. The music is classic, fun and you can understand the words.”



Perris residents Teresa Izaguirre and her husband, Jose, share a dance during the Third Annual Senior Prom May 20 in the City of Perris.

A great program

Jose Izaguirre and his wife, Teresa, spent most of the night on the dance floor, moving to the tunes of the Fabulous 50s, with a little Motown, Michael Jackson and the British Invasion. Both heaped praise on the City for once again organizing a night to remember.

“This is a great program,” said Jose Izaguirre, 67. “We’ve enjoyed it for the last three years and it’s something we always look forward to. We appreciate the City of Perris doing something great for its seniors. It just keeps getting better and better.”

Teresa Izaguirre, 65, said she and her husband met decades ago while dancing. It was relaxing then and it’s relaxing in 2016, she said.

“All the stress goes out the door,” she said. “We feel great because the City makes us feel great. We have a lot of fun. We appreciate the City for organizing this event. It makes us feel like aces.”

Like many others who took part in the prom, Alice Mangrum, 69, also participates in other activities the City sponsors for seniors. She takes line-dancing lessons and works out regularly as part of senior-exercise program.

“Movement is the key,” Mangrum said.

Leonard McNeal, 75, attended his first Senior Prom this year. He says it won’t be his last.

“I’m having a very good time,” he said in between dances. “This is a really nice way to show older people how much the City respects them. I would rate this event a perfect 10!”

The night ended with the crowning of the Prom Queen and King. Lena McFarlane, 94, was crowned queen while William Rodriguez, 78, put on the crown as king. Rodriguez summed up his night succinctly.

“I had a great time,” he said.



Prom Queen Lena McFarlane and King William Rodriguez moments after being honored at the Senior Prom in Perris.

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