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### Perris Sets the Pace for Healthy Cities



Perris residents enjoying a free winter workout as part of the Live Well Perris program.

Healthy living advocates are using the success of the City's Live Well Perris program as they kick off a series of forums aimed at educating elected officials and parks and recreation experts about how to bring more and better parks to their communities.

The Feb. 25 "listening session" in the Perris City Council Chambers is the first of four throughout California, said Kanat Tibet, director of the California Healthy Eating Active Living Cities Campaign. Another has been scheduled in Stockton. Dates for the other meetings are pending.

The **Healthy Eating Active Living (HEAL) Cities Campaign** helps city officials adopt policies to improve community physical activity and retail food environments.



Live Well also featured a farmers market with healthy, local produce for sale.

The Campaign focuses on three **policy areas** that were selected by city officials themselves: **land use, healthy food** and **workplace wellness**. Since 2008, **one third of California's cities**, home to more than 10 million residents, have joined the Campaign by adopting HEAL resolutions and policies. The campaign is a partnership with the **League of California Cities** and has begun expanding across the country.

Tibet said state officials know well the success of the Live Well Perris campaign, which has garnered national, state and regional awards for excellence. Thousands of Perris residents have taken part in the dozens of Live Well Perris programs since the effort began in 2013, including health fairs, weekend exercise workouts, hikes, sports clinics and a "Chef-in-the-Classroom" outreach to elementary school students.

"Perris is doing a wonderful job," Tibet said.



School children learned how to make healthy - and tasty - snacks with help from chef Lee Burton.

Tibet said the success of Live Well Perris will be highlighted during the HEAL Cities Campaign as a blueprint for other cities to follow.

Those successes include the opening to great acclaim of Mercado Park in the City's disadvantaged Downtown area, the ongoing construction of a new soccer complex adjacent to Patriot Park, open the Big League Dreams sports complex and Drop Zone Aquatics Center and complete major renovations at several other Perris parks, including Metz, Morgan and Bob Long parks.

That's in stark contrast to many other cities since the Great Recession in 2008, many communities balanced their budgets by slashing parks and recreation services, Tibet said. In Perris, the City received a \$3.5 million grant to build Mercado Park, for instance, and received a nearly \$1million grant to expand its Live Well program through 2016.



The annual Tour de Perris draws cyclists from around the local area.

In an email announcing this month's Perris meeting, Tibet hailed "parks, recreation and open spaces are antidotes to today's obesity and diabetes epidemics."

"One in three children is predicted to develop Type II diabetes during their lifetime," Tibet said. "That ratio rises to one in two for Latino, African American and Native American children. Parks provide a potent strategy for the treatment and prevention of weight-gain, obesity, type-2 diabetes, and various chronic health problems and they can play an essential role in fighting chronic health problems."

Perris official say they are proud of the City's commitment to parks.

Mayor Daryl Busch said that Perris residents take advantage of the City's parks and recreation programs and support the Live Well campaign by turning out by the hundreds for such activities.



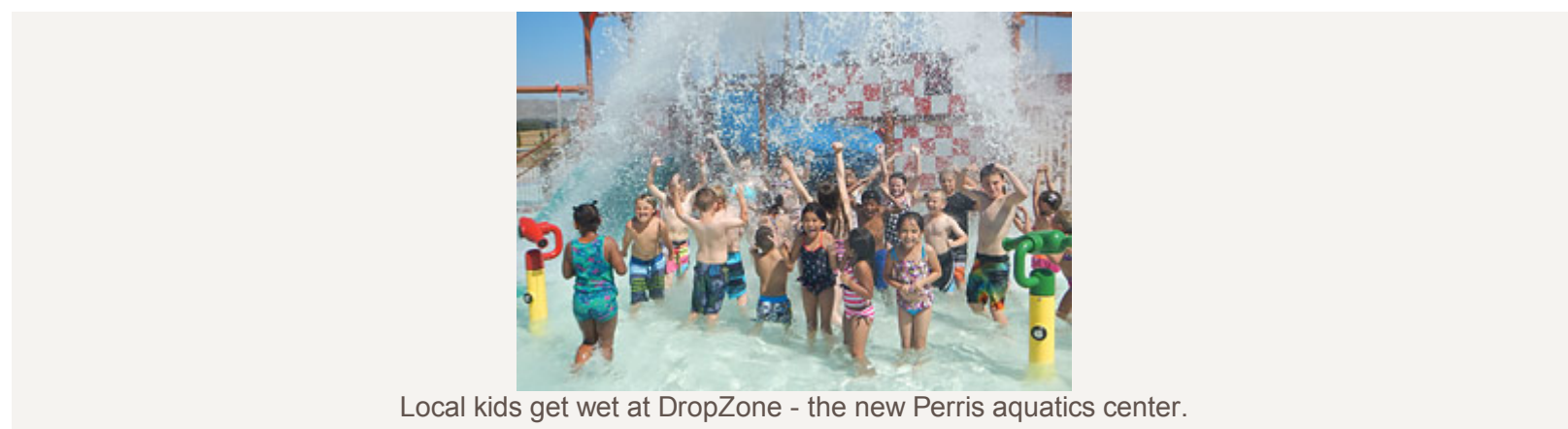
A 5K powerwalk was added to the 2014 Tour de Perris.

"We are most proud of our parks because they are beautiful and because they are well used," Busch said. "We have made great strides in expanding and improving our parks and we will continue to do so in the future."

Mayor Pro-Tem Tonya Burke said it is an honor that the HEAL Cities campaign kicks off in Perris.

"Perris is being recognized throughout the state for taking the initiative to establish important programs that improve the lives of our residents," she said.

Burke, who teaches Zumba, credits exercise with helping her lose weight and maintain a healthy lifestyle. She said that Perris provides many classes and activities for free or minimal charge, which encourages disadvantaged residents to get on the path to healthy eating and exercising.



Local kids get wet at DropZone - the new Perris aquatics center.

"It's life-changing," she said.

City Councilwoman Rita Rogers and Councilman Julio Rodriguez, both members of the parks and recreation committee, said Perris is setting the pace for its commitment and creativity to improve parks and healthy living programs. Rogers said the upcoming HEAL Cities public forum "presents a wonderful opportunity to showcase what we've done and what we are doing to provide facilities and programs that improve the lives of our residents.

"It's a pleasure to see Perris take the lead throughout California," Rogers said. "We are being emulated."

Rodriguez said he is excited to welcome the HEAL Cities campaign to Perris and that he is looking forward to working with other communities so they can better assist their residents to enjoy a better quality of life.



Residents participating in a community hike at the Lake Perris Recreation area.

"It's wonderful to be able to showcase the things we've been able to do," Rodriguez said. "The City of Perris is committed to living well and it's showing with our future programs. I will never get tired of restating our City's commitment to living well and staying active."

City Councilman David Starr Rabb said more and more Perris residents are taking the Live Well program to heart. He said he sees increasing numbers of folks walking, running and working out at the City gym.

"It's taken off in a way no other initiative I've ever seen," he said. "It is good that people are taking it to heart."

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