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Focus on Cancer Survivors at Foss Field Park

Cancer survivors became superheroes during the American Cancer Society's "Relay for Life" April 25th at Foss Field Park in Perris.

Perris Mayor Daryl Busch, who has been fighting prostate cancer for six years, put on a purple cape during the opening ceremonies of the annual 24-hour Relay for Life.

The Mayor then addressed the crowd, urging support for both cancer victims and their families struggling to cope and make sense of their circumstances.

"Cancer not only messes with your body," Busch said. "It messes with your mind. When you have this disease, the family member supporting you need support."

Busch joined other cancer survivors taking part in the first lap of the relay around the park. A second lap was held for caregivers and family members. The City of Perris was among the agencies hosting a team to take part in the 24-hour event. The City has supported the relay for years by sponsoring teams and making the event site available for the hundreds of volunteers who walk throughout the around-the-clock relay.



Cancer survivors donned t-shirts with this encouraging sentiment during the 24-hour Relay for Life at Foss Field Park in Perris.

Relay for Life Chairman Bob McGinty, a three-time cancer survivor, called the City's support "amazing."

"They give us all we need to ensure a successful event," McGinty said. "Partnering with the City of Perris is one of the best things we've ever done. They are phenomenal people."

Assemblyman Jose Medina, D-Riverside, and Perris Auto Speedway promoter Don Kazarian were among the dignitaries at the Relay for Life. Medina expressed his support for the courage and discipline displayed by all the survivors present at the event and the loved ones of those who have died from cancer.

"All of you who are here today are superheroes," he said.

Kazarian has raised more than \$100,000 in the last nine years to fight cancer and now sets his sights at collecting \$200,000. The speedway collects money throughout its racing season by sending drivers into the stands to collect dollars and change in their helmets. Kazarian said the disease has hit the racing community hard in recent years and he said he looks forward to the day when there will be no more need for donations.

"We'll beat it, and then what a party we will have," he said.



Kay McGinty puts a "Superhero's Cape" on Perris Mayor Daryl Busch during the April 25 Relay for Life.

The audience included Perris resident Marcela Quirosde-Ruelas, who is fighting advanced breast cancer. Since her diagnosis two years ago, the 34-year-old mother has undergone four surgeries, chemotherapy and remains on radiation treatments. She said she draws strength from her son, Ricky, who raided his piggy banks and donated the coins inside to help fight cancer.

"He's my joy," she said. "I'm not going to die. I'm going to beat this. I feel good. I have a lot of support."

Quirosde-Ruelas thanked the City for its continuing support of the Relay for Life.

"It helps the American Cancer Society," she said. "It helps me."



Survivors led the opening lap of the 24-hour Relay for Life at Foss Field Park in Perris.

Kelli Biello inspired the crowd with her story, which begins when she was diagnosed with cancer when she was 22. She underwent 12 rounds of chemotherapy treatments and has remained cancer-free since then and is now considered cured.

"Survivors are the reason we celebrate," Biello said. "Of course, we remember the ones we have lost but the survivors are the ones that bring the hope that we can fight back against cancer and we can win. They are the living proof! I am standing in front of you as the living proof!"

Biello has repeated her story of triumph many times over the years and plans to do so once again on July 4, when the Perris Auto Speedway hosts a major racing card. Once again, donations will be collected to continue the war on cancer.

Biello's closing comments to the Perris Relay for Life audience: "Stay well, get well, find cures and fight back."

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