



home > city hall > press releases

Seniors Take to the Dance Floor

The City's second annual Senior Prom attracted people from Perris, neighboring communities and elsewhere in Southern California, with non-residents asking the same question: why don't we have this where we live?

Nearly 100 "seniors"—residents 55 and older—decked themselves out May 30 for the 2015 Senior Prom at the Bob Glass Gymnasium, where the theme of the evening was "The Great Gatsby."

That meant feather boas and fedoras, snappy hats and colorful shirts and dancing to classical tunes like "Puttin' on the Ritz" and "I've Got You Under My Skin." They took formal portraits, received escorts to their tables and dined on baked chicken, steamed vegetables and red velvet cupcakes.

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Perris 2015 Senior Prom King Sidney Lee, 87, enjoys a dance with Prom Queen Grace Eclarinal during the May 30 event at the Bob Glass Gymnasium.

Richard Gardner made the trip from Wildomar.

"This was incredible, a great idea, a wonderful time!" said Gardner, 62. "I cannot give everybody involved enough kudos. I wish there was something like this where I lived. It was an outstanding event. The seniors were made to feel really special."

Kathy Foss, 61, made the trip to Perris from Orange County. She said she knows of no other senior proms in her community.

"It's great to get dressed up and dance," Foss said as she waited for her portrait. "The City of Perris is to be commended for showing its respect to the senior population."

Perris Mayor Daryl Busch and City Councilwoman Rita Rogers attended.

Busch said the prom is part of the City's ongoing Live Well Perris healthy-eating active living campaign to get people off their couch and moving. This dance encourages the 55-and-up crowd that the City cares about their well-being too, he said.

"We want to make sure we provide appropriate activities to our seniors," he said. "This is a special event for them."

Rogers said the City offers regular exercise classes for seniors throughout the week, including Zumba and other routines. She promised to get her exercise.

"I wore my dancing shoes!" Rogers said. "We're going to have a real fun time tonight. It's very important we address the needs of our seniors by creating events they enjoy and participate in."



Prom Queen Grace Eclarinal and Prom King Sidney Lee stand between Perris Mayor Daryl Busch and City Councilwoman Rita Rogers at the second annual Senior Prom.

Teresa and Jose Izaguirre danced early and often. They hit the dance floor and moved through the musical numbers with a style and grace that comes from years of mastering swing dancing.

"We like getting dressed up and dancing like when we were young," said Jose Izaguirre, 67. "We came last year and had a great time and this year is even better. It's awesome."

Teresa Izaguirre, 64, said the dance makes seniors "forget all our problems and see people who happy."

"It makes us feel special," she said.

Alice Mangram, 68, said exercise is a key component to keeping seniors healthy and happy.

"The key for us seniors is to keep moving!" she said.

The two most senior residents—Sidney Lee, 87, and Grace Eclarinal, 88, were named Prom King and Queen. Their selections gave the City's prom an international flavor. Lee is from England; Eclarinal is a native of the Philippines.

Mayor Busch and Councilwoman Rogers presented Lee with a crown and Eclarinal with a tiara. The pair had the floor to themselves as they danced to the song "Always and Forever." Following their solo dance, other couples took to the floor as the music continued for a while longer before the evening ended.

Lee said he was pleased and delighted to earn the title of Prom King—and a little surprise.

"I thought they would pick a nice handsome guy!" he said. "I thoroughly enjoyed myself. The music, the band, the whole show was really good."

Eclarinal said she had a "very good time" at the prom.

"I had plenty of fun," she said.



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