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## **California Cities Solutions: Perris Adds a Chef in the Classroom to Improve Public Health**

*This story is part of an ongoing series featuring Helen Putnam Award entries. The 2015 entries are available on the League's website as a resource for cities in a searchable database called [California City Solutions](#). Perris' Chef in the Classroom program was submitted in 2015 for the CCS Partnership Intergovernmental Collaboration award category.*

The city of Perris originated as an agricultural enclave, spanning 31.39 square miles. From late 1990s to earlier this decade, the population doubled to nearly 75,000 residents, transforming the city from a small community into an urbanized, diverse community. As the population grew so did the city's obesity and diabetes rates, surpassing California's average. Committed to improving public health, the city partnered with several agencies and launched its Chef in the Classroom program in 2013. Introduced in Perris' elementary schools, the program enriches and transforms youth by providing nutrition education through fun and interactive cooking sessions.

*For more, see Page 2.*



## **Registration Open for Two Premiere League Conferences in Early 2016**

*New Mayors and Council Members Academy and City Managers Department Meeting*

With local elections now complete, the League invites cities to register their newly elected officials for the [New Mayors and Council Members Academy](#). *For more, see Page 3.*



## **City Managers Department Call for Award Nominations is Open for Three Awards**

*Deadline to Submit Applications is Wednesday, Dec. 9*

The League of California Cities® City Managers' Department is now accepting nominations for the three prestigious awards presented annually to distinguished members of the department.

*For more, see Page 4.*

'CCS' Continued from Page 1...

Though rising rates of obesity and diabetes are widespread throughout the country, these problems are particularly troubling in Riverside County. In the city elementary schools, an alarming 47 percent of the children qualified as overweight or obese. Because many aspects of an unhealthy life-style are passed down through generations, and begin at a very early age, Perris set out to teach the youth within its schools to make healthier choices.

The Perris City Council affirmed its commitment to improving public health during its annual strategic planning process. The city started a program to put a professional chef in the classroom to educate children about the benefits of healthy eating early enough to form good habits. The goal was to impact their current and future quality of life.

City leaders realized, however, that implementing such a program would involve overcoming several challenges. While partnerships with the county and local school districts were important, the most crucial partners were the kids in the classroom; the program's success hinged on effectively engaging these kids.

The first task was to find a chef who could communicate with youths. As discussions about putting a chef in the classroom progressed, a program began to take shape. Since the Chef in the Classroom program was new, the city established a promotion plan to reach out to students using social media outlets such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, the city's website and the local public access television channel.

Recognizing that a public health situation of this magnitude required a multi-jurisdictional solution, Perris began discussions with Riverside County Department of Public Health. In late 2013, the city became a sub-grantee of Riverside County for a three-year United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) grant, administered at the state level through the Nutrition Education Obesity Prevention Branch. The purpose of the grant was to educate low-income households about the benefits of good nutrition and physical exercise and the risks associated with poor diet and lack of exercise.

Local schools were reluctant to give up classroom time to a city-sponsored program and some initially passed over the opportunity. Convincing them that the program could fit into their structured curriculum or extracurricular activities required ongoing dedicated efforts and communication. These efforts proved to be fruitful when the city secured an agreement with two school districts and the Teaching, Helping, Inspiring, Nurturing Kids Together (THINK) program.

Ongoing discussions about the needs of the program with Chef Lee Burton proved that he was the right person for the job as he talked about the importance of learning about nutrition at an early age. The program began as a 40-class series spread over five weeks at various school sites. Each class session was designed to include a 30-minute educational component and a 30-minute interactive hands-on cooking demonstration component.

Chef Lee made the educational message simple. The interactive cooking demonstrations created enthusiasm and excitement in the classroom as students helped in the preparation of healthy recipes, by peeling oranges and bananas, mixing yogurt, folding wheat tortillas into veggie wraps and more.

Many of the children in the first round of classes lived in parts of Perris considered food deserts, sections of the city served primarily by corner markets with little or no access to fresh produce or other healthy foods. These children had little exposure to the fundamental concepts of good nutrition. As the classes progressed, the children understood the importance of eating healthy as they were preparing their own flavorful, nutritional snacks.

This program was designed to reach approximately 500 students. Chef Lee quickly became a celebrity amongst the students. This popularity resulted in other school administrators requesting the Chef in the Classroom program for their schools. At the end of the first grant year, the program held 140

classes reaching approximately 2,500 students. The program's effectiveness of the program was measured by the number of students reached and by its strength in helping to create enduring habits of choosing healthy foods over unhealthy ones. One instrument used to measure the program's effectiveness included youth questionnaire pre and post program participation.

The results of the assessment were encouraging, but the program's impact was noticed when a group of students who participated in the program approached their school cafeteria staff and put in a request that a recipe they created, chickpea dip with vegetables, be added to the lunch menu. Their enthusiastic description of the class, recipe, and of instructor Chef Lee convinced the employees to pass the request up the ranks, eventually reaching the Food Services director. Impressed by the youth's engagement, the director added the recipe and actually hired Chef Lee to develop healthy menus that were kid-approved for that school site and throughout the school district on an ongoing basis. That group of elementary school-aged students pioneered a health policy, system and environmental change for their community.

At the end of 2014, the city assessed the success of program and concluded that it met the goal of providing effective health education to young citizens. Perris' mayor hosted a celebration lunch for students that included veggies, fruit, and as a test, chocolate chip cookies. The children passed this test, when most of them passed over the cookies to reach for mixed berries and carrot sticks to fill their plates.

Parents in the community were initially intrigued when their children came home and talked about healthy foods, claiming to have learned about health from a professional chef. As the program unfolded, the parents applauded the collaboration between the agencies and the creativity of the program. Students have asked for, and the city plans to initiate for 2015, classroom sessions based upon the popular television program "Chopped" in which students will work in groups to compete for the chance to gain the recognition of their peers and school and city officials by preparing USDA approved healthy recipes.

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**'Conferences' Continued from Page 1...**

Scheduled for Jan. 20-22 in Sacramento, the conference is a must-attend for both newly elected officials, and veterans interested in a refresher course on the basic legal and practical framework in which city officials operate. The three-day event will feature critical training on important, fundamental topics for local government taught by policy experts and seasoned elected officials. The conference also includes AB 1234 ethics training.

[Register online.](#)

**City Managers Department Meeting**

The League is also gearing up for the [City Managers' Department Meeting](#), Feb. 3-5 in Indian Wells. The largest gathering of California city managers, the meeting includes sessions on a range of the most pressing issues facing California cities and the city management profession.

Two keynote speakers will be sharing their expertise. April Rinne, a sharing economy guide and globetrotter will address how the sharing economy affects cities. Kevin "Kal" Kallaugher, editorial cartoonist for the *Economist* and the *Baltimore Sun*, will engage city managers with his experience as an award-winning political cartoonist.

[Register online.](#)

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'Awards' Continued from Page 1...

Please submit nominations no later than Dec. 9. Additional information about the awards is below:

The [John H. Nail Memorial Award](#) is presented to an outstanding municipal assistant who has contributed significantly to his or her city government and to the advancement of the community as a whole. The department created the award in memory of a highly regarded city manager known for his great personal integrity.

The [Award for the Advancement of Diverse Communities](#) recognizes a city manager or assistant successful in promoting the advancement of diversity within the community and workplace by developing and implementing effective programs, policies and/or practices.

The [Wes McClure Award of Distinction](#) honors a leader making a difference for the profession. It honors one city manager's outstanding career service, leadership, ethics, expertise and innovation.

Nomination forms can be found at: [www.cacities.org/managers](http://www.cacities.org/managers). Please send completed forms to [Meghan McKelvey](#) with the subject line "award nomination" or submit nominations by mail to:

Meghan McKelvey  
League of California Cities  
1400 K Street, Suite 400  
Sacramento, CA 95814

A confirmation will be emailed to you upon receipt of your completed nomination form.

Please direct any questions to [Meghan McKelvey](#) at (916) 658-8253.

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### **Apply for a 2015 City Managers' Department Meeting Graduate Student Scholarship**

The League of California Cities City Managers' Department will provide a select number of scholarships to Masters of Public Administration graduate students in California who wish to attend the City Managers' Department Meeting in Indian Wells, Feb. 3-5.

The scholarship (value \$1,000) will cover the cost of the three-day conference registration, as well as up to two nights of hotel lodging (room and tax only). Session information can be found at [www.cacities.org/citymanagersed](http://www.cacities.org/citymanagersed).

Those interested in applying should complete their application and essay online at [www.cacities.org/managersscholarship](http://www.cacities.org/managersscholarship) before 5 p.m. on Wednesday, Dec. 9.

The following information will be required and a confirmation email will be sent once your completed application has been received:

- Applicant information;
- Essay: A 300–500 word essay about why you are interested in local government; and
- Short resumé.

For questions regarding the scholarship, please contact [Meghan McKelvey](#) at (916) 658-8253.

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## **U.S. Communities Now Offers Democracy Live Electronic Balloting Services**

*Informational Webinar Scheduled Nov. 17 and 19*

U.S. Communities, the League-sponsored cooperative purchasing program, is pleased to announce that [Democracy Live](#) has been awarded a multi-year contract to provide electronic balloting through the innovations solutions solicitation.

Democracy Live was awarded the contract based on demonstrated success of its LiveBallot application, which makes it possible for voters with disabilities, voters in the military and Americans living abroad to access their local ballot materials online. With over 500 successful deployments to date, Democracy Live is the leading provider of web balloting in the United States. Democracy Live strives to ensure its tools are cost effective and create efficiencies that improve the delivery and processing of ballots.

### **Informational Webinars**

U.S. Communities will be hosting two free informational [one-hour webinars](#) for members to learn more about Democracy Live and its services. Speakers will include representatives from U.S. Communities and Democracy Live.

Register for either webinar by clicking on the dates below:

- [Tuesday, Nov. 17, 8 a.m.](#)
- [Thursday, Nov. 19, 10 a.m.](#)

### **About U.S. Communities**

The U.S. Communities Government Purchasing Alliance, a strategic partner of the League of California Cities, is a government purchasing cooperative that reduces the cost of goods and services by aggregating the purchasing power of public agencies nationwide. U.S. Communities provides world class procurement resources and solutions to local and state government agencies, school districts (K-12), higher education, and nonprofits. State and local governments have access to a broad line of competitively solicited contracts with best in class national suppliers.

For additional information, please visit [www.USCommunities/LCC](http://www.USCommunities/LCC).

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## **UPDATE: Session Proposal Deadline for 2016 Mayors & Council Members Executive Forum Extended**

*Submit proposals By Nov. 11*

Are you still holding on to a great session idea for the 2016 Mayors & Council Members Executive Forum?

[Don't delay, act now!](#) The deadline to submit your session ideas has been extended to Wednesday, Nov. 11.

### **What is the Executive Forum?**

- The Mayors & Council Members Executive Forum is a premier educational conference for new and seasoned mayors and council members from all throughout the state. This event is focused on educating elected officials about cutting edge approaches to challenges facing cities.
- A two day conference that includes general sessions, workshops, and networking.

### **Who Can Submit?**

- Submissions, non-commercial in nature, from any individual, group, business or organization, on any topic are welcome.
- The Executive Forum Program Planning Committee will consider the educational value of each proposal and the extent to which it presents new and/or significant information.
- Sessions may not include sales, commercialism or product promotion of any kind.

### **Where Do I Submit My Idea?**

- Only proposals submitted online [through this proposal form](#) will be considered.
- There are a limit to the amount of words allowed within the title and description of each proposal. We recommend you write your proposal in a word-processing program first, and then paste the final version into the online form.

Session proposals will be reviewed by the planning committee. If you have any additional questions or to see last year's program, please contact [Caitlin Cole](#) at (916) 658-8248.

Visit [Mayors and Council Members Executive Forum Call for Proposals](#) for additional information and to submit proposals.