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CITY OF PALMDALE *NEWS RELEASE*

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City of Palmdale Honors Community Builders at Council Meeting

PALMDALE – The Palmdale City Council honored several local individuals, pastors, churches and law enforcement staff at its last meeting to thank them for their many community building efforts over the past year.

Mayor Jim Ledford presented Certificates of Recognition on behalf of the Council to four local community leaders for their support of a new "Family Day" event, which took place at Courson Park on the 3rd Sunday of the month from June to October.

Honored were Pastor Gary Moorehead of In His Will Ministries, Pastor Jeryl Ross of Word of Life Outreach Ministries, Pastor James Jones of New Beginnings Outreach Ministries and Pastor Mike Gonsalves of Victory Outreach Ministries.

"Thank you for making a big difference in our community," Ledford said.

According to the City's Director of Neighborhood Services Mike Miller, the idea for the "Family Day" event came from discussions within the City's Neighborhood Advisory group, of which the four honorees are a part of.

"We gather on these 'Family Days' for an afternoon of talking about the issues that affect us, live entertainment and some good BBQ," Miller said. "We're creating a lot of synergy in our downtown and we couldn't do it without these four great community leaders."

Miller told the audience about three homeless individuals who came to “Family Day” events and, thanks to the assistance of the various groups, were able to get into programs that got them off the streets and transformed their lives.

Certificates of Recognition were also presented to Antelope Valley Youth Build Executive Director Rossie Johnson and Captain Don Ford, on behalf of the Los Angeles County Sheriff Department Palmdale Station, for partnering together in their efforts to make a difference in the lives of young adults. Both Johnson and Ford also are part of the Neighborhood Advisory group.

According to Captain Ford, Johnson approached him with the idea of having sheriff’s deputies meet with students from AV Youth Build to build better relationships.

“Rossie asked if we could do some things with the youth they are mentoring,” Ford told the audience. “He said they didn’t all have a good trust with the police, so he asked if they could come by our ‘Coffee With A Cop’ events we hold once a month on Fridays at McDonalds on Palmdale Blvd. The students got to talk one-on-one with the deputies and discuss the fact that we’re all together in this and we’re one community.”

Building on the first meetings, Johnson and Captain Ford took it a step further: a Sheriffs vs. Students all-day softball game and gathering. “We had a great time,” Ford said. “We played softball and talked about life. It was a very positive event.”

Johnson agreed. “For us at Youth Build, it was about establishing relationships based on mutual respect,” he said. “Community is all about relationships.”

Johnson told the audience that students from Palmdale, Compton, Long Beach, Pasadena and Moreno Valley all participated in the softball event.

“It was Palmdale leading the way,” noted Johnson.

At the Council meeting, one of the Youth Build students told Council about the experience.

“Bringing law enforcement together with our community can turn into a great thing,” said Youth Build’s Rehonda Trotter. “As the community gets to know the officers that serve their community, they will feel more comfortable knowing that they are really there to protect and serve the community. By bringing everyone together we hope to lower the crime rate and prove that community engagement will benefit us all.”

“These are the kinds of things that build great communities,” Ledford said. “We’re heading into 2015 with a solid commitment to continue to build bridges and bring people together.”