

Mike Yakawich's 21st March Against Drugs and Violence in Billings, Montana

Robin James Graham

June 9, 2018



UTS alumnus, Mike Yakawich has been a force for good in Billings, Montana for many years. He has been persistent in his desire to serve the Billings community and more recently to serve in local politics too. Last Saturday was no exception being the 21st year of an event he started back in 1997, the [March Against Drugs and Violence](#). However, this is only one of the many local events and community organizations that Mike is involved with or has started. His commitment and desire to serve others is reflected in both his constancy and his consistency. He shows up!

The March Against Drugs and Violence started in 1997, with 12 people, including kids in a little red wagon. About 250 came out for this year's march, rallying on the Yellowstone County courthouse lawn on Saturday June 9th.

Yakawich, a Billings City Councilman, said, "We had great speakers: City of Billings Mayor, Bill Cole; Police Chief, Rich St. John; Travis Birney from the Drug Enforcement Administration; Yellowstone County Commissioner, Denis Pitman; Billings City Council member, Chris Friedel; Pastor Melvin Terry of the All Nations Christian Fellowship Church; and guest speakers from the local Women's Release Center, as well as a letter from the Montana State Attorney General. We had 300 t-shirts and gave them away. The TV said we had 250 in the crowd and the newspaper said 150. It was a great turnout whatever the count."

We impacted 232 people prior to the event with our presentations to clubs, task forces and community boards on the topic of substance abuse prevention. We handed out 150 swag bags with great information

on drug prevention provided by our sponsors. Many people shared how this event (each year) impacted them. One youth, Piper, said, 'This event means people care.' Another youth, Ashley said, "This is a type of support group but bigger." The Billings City Attorney, Brent Brooks commented, 'Momentum generates momentum. Keep it going.' Kelsey a staff member with the youth runaway program, shared, 'People from all walks of life can come together at one time to support a common mission to bring light on this drug abuse issue.'

Thanks to a lot of team support, sponsors of the program, and great volunteers."

Here are a couple of links about Saturday's March Against Drugs and Violence:

Mike speaks with great fondness about his experience at UTS and how it prepared him for a life of service.

"It was early in my seminary career that two professors taught me a great deal about community. It was Dr. Richard Quebedaux and Dr. Henry O. Thompson. They taught me about the social action, community service and working in the grassroots. Later, assigned to Montana, I realized the value of community work and service. From early on, we initiated food programs and basic home church based projects.

Often [Father Moon](#) would speak to us State Leaders in meetings and ask us what we are actually doing for the sake of the kingdom building? He would often conclude his speeches imploring us to go back out to our states to serve, make a change and make a difference.



From those inspirational talks, his leadership and examples, we initiated many service based programs in Montana including The Annual March Against Drugs and Violence, the Annual 9-11 Community Celebration of Life, the Annual ACLC MT Conferences addressing drug education to violence prohibition. Clean up projects, assisting other organizations as Boy Scouts and ELKS Club and volunteering to join other Boards such as the Suicide Prevention Coalition for Yellowstone Valley, the South Side Neighborhood Taskforce, Black Heritage Association, school committees, and United Way Roots of Promise are some other examples. All of this would be the foundation and stepping stones to greater effort at public service."