

Enthusiastically Engaged in Community

Michael Yakawich
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MLK Jr. Day Organizing Committee 2014

“You will never plough a field if you only turn it over in your mind.”
Irish Proverb

Enthusiastically engaged, committed and passionate, we continue to reach out to the community. This is a story to share with the hope of inspiring others to seek ways to build a better community. As Benjamin Franklin commented, “Well done is better than well said.”

We discovered this when we helped prepare, plan and organize an incredible week of MLK Jr. Day 2014 events here in Billings. We worked with great organizations, awesome music and had inspiring speakers from Atlanta to Billings’ included civil rights leader Dr. Rev. Gerald Durley.



Spending time with the residents at Park View Care Center

During the month of December, we have been reaching out to the local Catholic Junior High School and provided an art/origami class for the students. Mrs. Yakawich and her youth taught and supported the students on creating origami Christmas Manger Scenes. It is a fascinating project including a shoe box decorated plus many origami figures. The students were extraordinarily happy meeting the college youth who came to assist Mrs. Yakawich in the project.



Youth playing music for the residents at the local rest home

Issues besiege every city in America from the shut-in to the homelessness, drug abuse to suicide and racial issues to educational issues facing our youth. What to do? This and other issues can lead us to action in one form or another. Do something! Certainly such issues can be overwhelming as factors of time; energy and even fear come into play.

There is something that rings so true about fear in taking no action. As Norman Vincent Peale commented, “Action is a great restorer and builder of confidence. Inaction is not only the result, but the cause, of fear. Perhaps the action you take will be successful; perhaps different action or adjustments will have to follow. But any action is better than no action at all.” Or as Dale Carnegie explained, “Inaction breeds doubt and fear. Action breeds confidence and courage. If you want to conquer fear, do not sit home and think about it. Go out and get busy.”



Mike with Mrs. Dow teacher of the 6th Grade at St. Francis Junior High

Poor words and poor actions are shameful. Poor words with good actions are commendable. Good words with good actions are extraordinarily awesome. Perhaps, most of all we need heart. As Mother Teresa shared, “It is not the magnitude of our actions but the amount of love that is put into them that matter.” Or as Florence Nightingale would say, “I think one’s feelings waste themselves in words; they ought all to be distilled into actions which bring results.”

We have been visiting a local rest home each month providing discussions on the scripture as well as some entertainment. It has been a great opportunity, invited by the local South Park View Care Center, to present a Sunday Service with the residents. We have had discussions based on the scripture that has been both moving as well as interesting. During our time, there is much sharing from the heart on topics as “Memories”, “Friendship”, and “Gratitude”. People would share how they turned tragedies into blessings, built deep bonds over the years in war or in years of labor or have expressed finding God in the midst of losing a child, terminal illness or family challenges. What an honor to be with them.

On some occasions, the youth will play the guitar, bass clarinet or flute for the residents to enjoy. One day a group photo taken a month ago, was copied and given to all in the photo. Everyone was so happy feeling a deeper sense of fellowship than ever before. Anne Frank explained, “How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to import the world.” In such actions, we find the joy in the challenge of reach out in service to others.

Just last week, we provided a class to the 6th Grade religion. I taught on family values. There were three classes with student of amazing testimonies and experiences. Some talked about how prayers were answered, how they saw angels as another shared how he saw God working in his life. It is indeed amazing to be around so many wonderful young people, students and staff.

We often may wonder how this world will change. Will the Messiah change it all? Will that church or this group of people make this world a better place? Perhaps, they may! Nonetheless, I often am reminded that it is up to us to make the change. Often a cliché but certainly so much truth, “If not you, who? If not now, when?” Over the past year, I was asked to conduct 8 funerals. It happened because of make relationships and a willingness to serve. These alone were wonderful experiences and opportunities.



Serving food and cleaning as we volunteer at the local senior center

We live in extraordinary times. These are times to roll up our sleeves and seek to live for the sake of others. This is a great time to live for the greater good. A time to engage collaborates, enhance ideas and go out and put one’s faith into action.

Sometimes the hardest actions are those easiest to do! Over these past months, our area has been hit hard with winter. What a blessing in more ways than one. We could go out and shovel the neighbor’s walks. It seems just one action at a time is necessary. As Martin Luther King Jr. taught, “Take the first step of faith. You don’t have to see the whole staircase, just take the first step.” John and Naomi were out recently doing just that shoveling the neighbor’s sidewalks. The neighbors appreciated it and what a wonderful service as well. No one likes to slip and fall on the ice nor has to chop ice off their sidewalk snow fall.

Some would say faith without works is dead. I know from personal experiences this is so true. Although I can preach so much to others about my faith, until I put it into action is when the “rubber meets the road!” People know if we are genuine when we are willing to roll up our sleeves and simply serve. Henry Ford stated, “You can’t build a reputation on what you’re going to do.” Thus, this could involve just volunteering at a local senior center and serve food and clean tables. It could involve walking around the park and picking up the garbage which my friend Chad and I do whenever we have time.

Of course, being consistent is as valuable as doing it once. When we serve once that is great. When we go out and do it more often and become more of a habit that is most remarkable. Again, people notice why we do it, when we do it and how we do it!

Finally, let me propose a format to change your community. I call it the “*four position neighborhood foundation*”.

- (1) Make relationships with neighbors on all four sides of your home,**
- (2) Get to know them, share contact information, support and serve,**
- (3) Expand this simple model throughout your neighborhood.**

Engage enthusiastically with your community and positive, passionate and inspirational changes will happen.