



Addicts March to Disprove Stereotype

by Rebecca Gannon

(WICHITA, Kan.)

Dozens of people gathered at Wichita's Old Town Square to spread a message Tuesday evening, asking to "End the Stigma."

It was part of what organizers call a "Recovery Parade". This was for anyone recovering from drug or alcohol addiction. About 50 people met at Miracles Inc., at 2nd and Wabash. Many brought signs to define them as something as other than a person in recovery - a mother, a wife, a tax payer.

Raul Velasquez - he spells his name "V as in Victory" - said it was an appropriate place to start the march, since it was a miracle he turned his life around. He's been in recovery for more than a year.

He led the chant as people marched down to Old Town Square, where they watched a local high school dance group perform. They said the Serenity Prayer, and then marched back to Miracles Inc., where they could enjoy pizza, drinks, face painting, and games for the kids.

Charlotte Mingo also marched Tuesday evening. She started her recovery 30 days ago. "I've lived in a lot of pain, and I substituted my pain for a lot of other pain, and I'm tired of it."

As a counselor, Larry Smith sees a different side of recovery. He looked out at the 50 attendees, not one of whom was a client of his. "Even if we only get one out of 100 to realize there's a better way of living, it's worth it."

While the group met at Miracles Inc., many other organizations are involved in the parade. Those include: the United Way of the Plains, Parallax, Higher Ground, Knox Center, Center for Health and Wellness, Value Options, the Wichita Treatment Center, St. Anthony Family Shelter, Salvation Army, United Methodist Open Door, Harbor House, and Perfect Peace Christian Church.

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