

Issues Brief

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Volunteers Boost Yakima's Outreach

April is National Volunteer Month

April is National Volunteer Month, and April 15th to the 21st is National Volunteer Week.

Both serve as reminders of the many ways volunteers assist the City of Yakima in its outreach to serve residents.

"The City of Yakima appreciates the many volunteers who are giving back to the community," said Mayor Kathy Coffey. "Their assistance makes it possible for the City to expand services and opportunities for residents."

From City-appointed boards, committees, and commissions to the City fire and police departments, volunteers are making a difference day-in and day-out.

An example of that impact is in the City of Yakima's Office of Neighborhood Development Services (ONDS).

"ONDS uses volunteers to provide free snow removal, lawn and debris services, alley and vacant lot clean up, graffiti removal, and assembly of wheel chair ramps," said ONDS Manager Archie Matthews. "In 2017 we logged 9,527 volunteer hours and in the past 10 years we have logged a total of 104,362 hours."



Volunteers help with a community clean-up effort in East Yakima.

ONDS started working with local volunteers in 1995, when it began working with Habitat for Humanity to paint homes for qualified senior/disabled property owners during the summer months.

"Over the years, we have broadened our volunteer base working with local schools, churches, and other local organizations," Matthews said. "We also began working with the local justice system to work with court-ordered community service hours."

Over at the City of Yakima's Harman Center, volunteers serve in the kitchen, teach classes, help with gardening and organize a library. Volunteers play such an

important role that the Center offers a "Volunteer of the Month" honor.

"They are a fabulous help to the Center and we appreciate every single one of them," said Recreation Program Supervisor Leslie Richards. "If anyone wants to volunteer at the Harman Center they just need to give me a call (576-6402) or come by the Center."

Call 575-6101 for information on volunteering with the City's Office of Neighborhood Development Services. Or visit <http://bit.ly/ykmaonds> for information about ONDS and <https://yakimaparks.com/senior-center/> for information about the City of Yakima's Harman Center.

Councilmember Brad Hill Seeks Assistance for At-Risk Youth

Coordination of efforts sought by Council member

I have devoted my career to public service, including as an Arabic linguist in the U.S. Marine Corps and a Congressional liaison for the Defense Intelligence Agency. I currently serve as the center director at Fort Simcoe Job Corps.

It was a natural extension of my career in public service to run for the Yakima City Council District #6 seat in 2017.

I am grateful to have been selected by voters to serve on the Council and have learned a great deal since beginning my term about four months ago.

As center director at Fort Simcoe Job Corps, I am intimately familiar with the many challenges faced by at-risk youth.

While the Yakima area is blessed to have several organizations that are devoted to serving at-risk kids, I believe there is a need for increased coordination of those efforts and an opportunity to enhance them.

That's where the City of Yakima comes in.

Some people may argue that at-risk youth programs and services are not within the purview of the City.

I believe that effectively addressing challenges faced by at-risk kids is absolutely



Yakima City Councilmember Brad Hill was elected to office in November 2017. He represents District 6 on the City Council.

fundamental to the future of our community, including its economic viability and sustainability . an issue squarely within the City's jurisdiction and scope of responsibility.

Ensuring that all kids in our community have the opportunity to be successful is imperative to continuing to grow and diversify our economy.

Greater coordination of the efforts of dedicated non-profits, faith-based organizations, schools, and others who serve our area's at-risk youth would result in the positive impact of the many programs and services offered in our community to be greatly magnified.

The City, I believe, could take a leadership role by bringing together the various at-risk youth services providers to evaluate potential redundancies in programs and services and

determine how best to maximize limited resources.

The City could also tap into the experience, expertise, and wisdom of retired community members to seek out and apply for grant funding that could help expand at-risk kids programs and services in Yakima.

I look forward to real progress being made on the issue of at-risk youth programs and services during my tenure on the Yakima City Council.

I am convinced that doing so will have a lasting and meaningful influence on the success of our community now and for many years to come.

The challenge is great and accomplishing the task at hand won't happen overnight. But, to quote former President John F. Kennedy, "If not us, who? If not now, when?"

Yakima Code Enforcement Helping Neighborhoods

Dangerous properties reduced from 119 to 47

Efforts by the City of Yakima's Code Enforcement Office are making a positive impact in area neighborhoods.

As of June 2015 the City had 119 properties declared dangerous. Now, less than 3 years later, that total has been whittled to 47.

"It is encouraging to see this progress underway in the City of Yakima," said Yakima City Councilmember and Neighborhood and Community Building Chair Kay Funk. "Hopefully we can continue this momentum to improve our neighborhoods."

Many of the buildings had been abandoned and squatters had moved in, creating fake utility accounts, Code Administration Manager Joe Caruso said.

Other issues included complaints of illegal drugs, properties being broken into and car prowls.

He said the City has been working with owners of the dangerous buildings to get them boarded up and secure.

At one point, the City received 5 to 7 complaints a week.



Before and after photos show the improvements in a neighborhood.

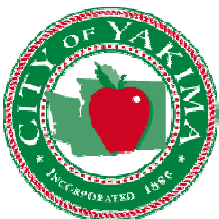
That has been reduced to 1 or 2 complaints every couple of months, Caruso said.

"It's making a big difference for neighborhoods," he said. "The neighbors are happy."

Caruso presented an update about the effort to the Yakima City Council's Neighborhood and Community Building Committee in March.

Y-PAC coverage of that meeting can be viewed anytime on-line at <http://bit.ly/2DzgyXw>

Visit <https://www.yakimawa.gov/services/codes/> for additional information about the City of Yakima's Code Administration Office.



The City of Yakima Issues Brief e-Newsletter is a monthly publication of the City of Yakima Community Relations Office. Questions or suggestions? Contact Communications & Public Affairs Director Randy Beehler at 509-575-6045 or randy.beehler@yakimawa.gov.

Visit <https://www.yakimawa.gov> for more information about the City of Yakima.