



"Stand in the Gap" Tri-State Marches Against Drug & Alcohol Abuse

By Carol Saia

Inspired by the May 2004 march in Manchester, KY (documented in *An Appalachian Dawn*), more than 40,000 people have taken a stand in similar marches against drugs in Eastern Kentucky alone.

Thousands more have marched throughout the U.S., including West Virginia, Georgia, Ohio, Mississippi, and Texas. Church members have walked together with civic leaders, high school officials and students, fire and police chiefs and sheriffs. Four thousand joined one march in Union County, Tennessee.

Six to seven thousand people from 200 churches joined three simultaneous "Stand in the Gap" marches, originating from Harrogate, Tennessee, Lee County, Virginia, and Middlesboro, Kentucky on Nov. 6, 2011. Passersby honked their horns in support. The three marches converged in Cumberland Gap, KY for a united prayer service to worship God and implore His help. Then a bluegrass band provided a concert. TV host John Becknell reports, "Some were crying, some pastors laying prostrate in the street before us in repentance after a prayer of repentance was prayed from the stage." As a strong wind blew, many looked upward and were surprised to see a cloud formation form a distinct cross in an otherwise cloudless sky. Stand in the Gap coordinator, Dr. Edwin Robertson, found out several days later that an 87-year-old woman had been praying that the Lord would give a sign in the heavens to confirm that He was pleased by this. Becknell states, "It moved many of us to tears. I believe the heart of God was touched and His Spirit was poured out on this tiny mountain town, Cumberland Gap." Daniel Spurlock affirmed, "Stand in the Gap was an incredible day for the Lord! As I flew the help coverage of this event, the views were so inspiring and confirming of Our Tri-State Peoples Love for God and our local land and its peoples. Flying across "The Gap" from Kentucky and looking to the South, I could see a Neon Safety Green view of people from Cumberland Gap to LMU. MY HEART SOARED higher than any flight I have ever made!

The tri-state coalition begun by the Stand in the Gap march continues with community meetings. Judges, DAs, pastors, and additional community leaders have participated in community forums to explore future possibilities for action.

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