

NWA marchers meet at Planned Parenthood for prayer

written by Alesia Schaefer |



FAYETTEVILLE — More than 250 participants walked in the second annual March for Life event held in northwest Arkansas Sunday, Jan. 22.

Pro-lifers joined their efforts Sunday afternoon as participants from the Cross Church in Springdale and walkers from St. Joseph Church in Fayetteville came together for a prayer service in front of the Planned Parenthood clinic in Fayetteville.

Walkers left from two locations — St. Joseph and a real estate office in Springdale — and simultaneously marched three miles to the prayer rally. Pastors Clint Smith and Chuck Butler of Cross Church delivered messages and prayers alongside Father Jason Tyler, pastor of St. Joseph Church.

The Fayetteville march was started in 2016 as a compliment to the state's March for Life in Little Rock held near the anniversary of the Roe vs. Wade decision. Last year's crowd was about 76 people.

Currently, there are only three locations in the state where surgical or chemical abortions are performed. Two of the locations are in Little Rock and the third is in Fayetteville.

Sheila Pursell, executive director of the Northwest Arkansas Catholic Respect Life Council and coordinator for the area's 40 Days for Life, works to educate people on the sacredness of human life in all its stages and on federal funding to Planned Parenthood.

“There are 34 crisis pregnancy centers in the state of Arkansas as opposed to the three abortion centers,” Pursell explained to the crowd. “Planned Parenthood laments that women would lose vital health care, but at the crisis pregnancy centers, women receive free medical care and living and emotional assistance.”

According to national statistics, crisis pregnancy centers outnumber abortion centers eight-to-one.

Pursell believes praying for women who have scheduled abortions and for the conversion of the hearts of mothers and workers who enter the doors of the abortion center is vital to the efforts of the ministry and encouraged participants to continue their efforts in the Lenten prayer campaigns.

Susan Anthony, youth director at St. Raphael Church in Springdale, brought 15 students to participate in the march.

“We have to support this cause if we are trying to teach our youth about the importance of life in all its stages,” she said. “It just makes sense.”

“We are here to support the most precious gift God has given us, life,” said Deacon Dan Cashman of Springdale who came to walk with his wife, Carolyn.

The couple has been involved in the pro-life effort for years and participated in previous years in Little Rock marches and prayer vigils.