

Pro-Life Waco through September of 2020: Pandemic and Dynamic Pivot

John Pisciotta, Director of Pro-Life Waco

◆ Before the Upheaval

2020 began with expectation of orderly expansion of our defense of life in the public square. This thinking collapsed in March with reactions to the Covid-19 virus.



A highlight of the pre-Covid-19 game plan was unveiling our new billboard truck at the March for Life in Austin on January 25, 2020. In 2019, Pro-Life Waco set a goal of replacing the truck used effectively for a decade. We named the new truck after the grandmother of the Waco pro-life movement, the late Carolyn Knowles. Carolyn II was positioned along Guadalupe Street on the march route to the Capitol. The truck and the Leftwich family grandchildren delighted thousands who marched by

For the first quarter of 2020, second Sunday Ecumenical Pro-Life Gathering featured tasty pasta and meatballs and excellent speakers. On March 8, Leyandria Murray Rotomski delivered a riveting personal testimony on being a child of a mom who was only 13 at the time of conception. A half-year would pass before we would gather again for "Second Sunday" at St. Mary's Hall.

◆ The Pandemic Pivot

With the suspension of outdoor and indoor monthly events, PLW went back to the drawing board for ways to remain effective in the public square. The pivot included three initiatives:

1. With Carolyn II looking great, we decided to place the billboard truck each weekend at a high-traffic location. Since pastor and church involvement is critical for defending life, our priority was churches located on heavily-traveled streets. We sought a two-month rotation hoping churches would join the collaboration.

Waco pastors responded enthusiastically at: St. Louis Catholic Church, Christ the King Baptist Church, Waco First Assembly of God, Church of the Open Door, Calvary Chapel, Knights of Columbus Hall (not quite a church), Parkview Baptist Church, and Olive Branch Christian Fellowship.

2. We hoped to continue a strong billboard outreach. However, donations dropped in the Covid-19 environment. So, we reluctantly decided to relinquish our jumbo billboard in Speegleville at the end of July. This billboard faces abortion-minded moms coming from the vast western Texas. Thankfully, our donors came through again. So, that no reversal was required. In August, Pro-Life Waco was able to add four junior billboards in Spanish-- a translation of Abortion Hurts. In September, we added five billboards calling on viewers to Vote Pro-Life. Pro-Life Waco began 2020 with a dozen billboards and reached 21 by the end of the third quarter.

3. And then there are those mighty "tiny billboards" -- yard signs at residences and churches. In the Covid-19 environment, yard signs can be on duty 24/7 and each day of the year. PLW bought 500 more yard signs and continued to make them available free of charge. The messages are "Pray to End Abortion", "Choose Life", and Vote Pro-Life. We took the proactive step of offering free delivery and installation during September.



While Pro-Life Waco sustained strong outreach during the middle six months of 2020, Planned Parenthood Waco was in retreat. The governor issued a mandate that closed all Texas abortion facilities from mid-March to Mid-April. When the order was lifted, other abortion centers resumed. However, the abortion side of Planned Parenthood Waco has remained closed through the time of this writing. We cannot be sure the closure is permanent. Let us continue to work and pray for the day when Planned Parenthood is completely removed from Waco.

◆ Even more robust for the final months of 2020.

—PLW's biggest event of the year was Sept. 12, National Day of Remembrance for Aborted Children, along with 200+ other cities. Heather Hobbs of Save The 1 was the keynote speaker with her testimony on pressures she faced to abort 3 of her children. Over 60 attended at the beautiful Rachel's Park Memorial.

—Second Sunday Ecumenical Pro-Life Gathering at St. Mary's Hall returns October 11.

—Our monthly outdoor events were sidelined only briefly. Pedestrian overpass outreach returned in May. Love Life Chain came back strong in June. July was terrific with an Independence Day theme.

—Sidewalk counseling resumed in July at Planned Parenthood on Highway 6. We are having a life-saving impact with conversations facilitated by offering lovingly "Blessing Bags."

AND 2021 will bring new initiatives, including a full-page *Waco Trib* ad on Jan. 22.

Rachel's Park Memorial

