

Nevada County gathers for all-day 'Love Walk 2'



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Photos by Liz Kellar/lizk@theunion.com

The Peace Choir of Nevada County led the crowd at Love Walk 2 in a singalong as the all-day event got underway on Mill Street Monday.



In September 2017, Nevada County responded en masse to a racist incident involving a local youth, when more than 1,000 residents gathered for an impromptu "Love Walk" through downtown Grass Valley.

Inspired by the turnout, organizers decided they didn't just want to keep the momentum going — they wanted to expand the event dramatically.

Love Walk 2, as it was dubbed, became an all-day "celebration of community" on Martin Luther King Jr. Day, featuring a march as well as musical entertainment, games and activities for children, a number of workshops and several films.

Approximately 350 people from all walks of life — including a large number of youth and families — came out for Monday's event, which was hosted by Creating Communities Beyond Bias and Community Beyond Violence, with support from South Yuba River Citizens League and Wild & Scenic Film Festival.

Sean Manchester and Emily Burton attended the march with Lake, 1, and Alden, 4.

"We really feel like it's part of our responsibility to the community, that everyone feels included and safe," Burton said,

Jamal Walker, who became so emotional at several points that he had to stop and compose himself, described to the crowd the events that led to the first Love Walk.

Walker had posted a video to Facebook to express his sadness over his son, Imani, being harassed by a group of young white men as he walked down Mill Street. That video, which received more than 34,000 views within a few days, sparked an informal plan for people to meet in front of Del Oro movie theater to show their support for the Walkers.

And show up they did, Walker recalled, noting that he asked those who came not to make it about politics, but instead make it "a time to love on one another."

One early supporter was then-Grass Valley Mayor Howard Levine, who spoke at the first Love Walk and again Monday.

"We are a family, a community of friends and a community of hearts," Levine said, invoking both King and Nelson Mandela. "We are here with love and with friendship and with peace."

College students Ana Mendez Mora and Amanda Shunk went to school with Imani Walker and both participated in the first event as well.

"It's not a political thing, which makes it even better," Mendez Mora said.

"I wanted to come back for the community I've been a part of for so long," said Shunk, who currently attends school in Chico. "It's really cool that our community does this — I really like the message."

Contact reporter Liz Kellar at 530-477-4236 or by email at lizk@theunion.com.

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