

“Building Resilience” — Mike Moyer, longtime member of Mountain Shadows, wants to spread the word about ways to reduce Adverse Childhood Events (ACEs) and help those affected build resilience. Mike points to three specific events that caused him to embrace this issue late in life.

The first event occurred about two-thirds through his thirty-one year career at The Dow Chemical Company. He was responsible for designing, building, and running chemical processes and research laboratories. One day, he received a new assignment. The conversation went like this: "Mike, you know what we need; help us get it." At the time, the company was very strong on technology but needed more 'soft skills' (i.e., people skills). Since he was responsible for management training in Dow North America, he became the designated expert for implementing team building and other core skill development. One course was held on weekends with spouses. The course was about how our minds work and how words we use in talking (including self-talk) are far more important than many people assume. At the end of several classes, a female colleague said to me, with tears in her eyes, that she wished she had this information twenty years ago when she was raising kids. That got Mike to thinking that maybe we should have a requirement for every couple to take this type of course before starting a family with children. Accepting that this would never happen, the idea stuck in his mind.

The second event, about twenty years later, occurred when he was approached by a friend when Mike and his wife Kathy came out of church in Elk Rapids, MI one Sunday morning. The friend passionately said, "Mike, you've got to see this movie!" So, he and Kathy saw the movie that very day. The movie blew him away! We all know that kids growing up in broken homes often have problems in school and sometimes throughout their lives. The movie showed, in mind-blowing ways, how extensive and permanent Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are in kids' lives all over this country. If we could end ACEs, many public health problems would disappear and there likely would be billions of dollars in health care costs saved annually. However, it is estimated that only five percent of public and private health care costs are spent on prevention. The movie also showed examples of how some communities in California, Washington State, and Connecticut have successfully worked to reduce some of the contributing problems (i.e., crime, drugs, and suicides) by thirty to sixty percent. These data are well documented and appear to also show long lasting results. So, it appears that there are some commonsense things that regular folks, joined in community efforts, can do and be successful. This outcome was encouraging and stuck in his mind.

The third event followed several years later, when his mother passed away and left an inheritance. He tried to use the inheritance to purchase the movie, with the intent of bringing it to Tucson and showing it to as many people as possible. He wasn't able to purchase the movie. However, he could rent it and have it shown. He's been successful in showing the movie to over on thousand people. His goal is to show it to at least thirty thousand people. The movie was recently hosted by Mike and the Children's Advocacy Center of Southern Arizona.

Here in Tucson, Mike has joined a team of people who are actively taking action to end ACEs and to increase resilience. The group is in the early stages of forming. There is no website yet to get more information. However, the group calls itself "Southern Arizona PACEs Community Coalition." PACEs is the acronym for positive and adverse childhood experiences. The group has started a twelve-month training program for community leaders and is being led by a man who has facilitated many communities in the USA and Canada. Those "trained" communities are making a difference in reducing ACEs. The changes are driven by the whole community and are not task force or government initiatives. Based on experience, there is a recognition that will take time to make big and effective changes; at least ten years.

The movie was recently hosted by Mike and the Children's Advocacy Center of Southern Arizona. Contact Mike for more information. You can access Mike's contact information in the church directory or by contacting the church office.