

Small Spirit-Filled Church Has Big Reputation for Impacting Kids

Coke, Pepsi, Microsoft, Apple. The very mention of these relatively non-controversial but highly successful names can illicit strong responses—good and not-so-good—depending on the person.

For King's View Assembly of God in Ione, Calif., the secret to its success within the community isn't its name but its reputation.

Ione is not a big community. As Pastor Dan Epperson says with a small chuckle, "There are about 4,000 people living in the city and about 4,000 more living in the local state prison."

Even though Ione is relatively small, quite a few people don't know the name of King's View Assembly of God—even though it has been there since 1955. Instead, a lot of townspeople know King's View under a bestowed name: "The Church That Takes Care of Kids."

Epperson explains the name is not an official one, but it's how members of the community often refer to the church.

"My little rule I live by is, 'Find a need and fill it,'" says Epperson, who has been leading the church the past 11 years. "Whether it's fixing a kid's broken bike or mowing a lawn, if we find a need, we do our best to find a way to fill it."

Epperson recalls driving by a school-aged child whose backpack was falling apart. The need was apparent.

"Rural Compassion had given us a bunch of backpacks, so we were able to give the boy a new one," Epperson explains. "And on Wednesday nights, we were noticing that quite a few of the

kids were acting up. We found out that many weren't eating supper. Now we provide hot dogs or pizza for the kids. This all lets them and their parents know we really care."

But the church isn't the only one with a catchy nickname. Epperson has earned a few as well, including "the hunter's ed guy," "the gun guy" and "the billboard guy."

"For the past seven years, I've been teaching about 150 people a year a hunter education class," Epperson says. "We hold the class at the church, and I also travel to other churches to hold classes. We give out free stuff, serve them lunch, and those attending get to know the church staff and pastor a bit."

In addition to some people deciding to visit the host church following a class, Epperson says he feels this is one way he and the church can serve the community.

"People from all over know me through this class," he says. "I always tell them that if they ever get in a tight spot while hunting, just to give me a call."

As far as the billboard name goes, Epperson explains there are two billboards in town and he with his wife, Colleen, and youth pastor Mikie Roggero and his wife, Julie, are pictured on half of one, inviting people to church and to start their week off right. In Ione, that's a pretty big deal.

Recently Epperson received another title—"Mayor" Epperson—as he was recently elected mayor of Ione.

"In Ione, you run for the city council, then the city council selects a mayor," Epperson explains. "Three years ago, I was elected to city council. Last year I was chosen as vice-mayor. This year I was named mayor."

But Epperson doesn't claim the spotlight for himself. He points to his staff, especially Roggero, whom Epperson

describes as a high-energy guy who can somehow work 60 hours a week at another job yet still have time to invest himself in the youth group and with kids in the community.

“Mikie has a great reputation in the community—everybody loves him,” Epperson says. “He has such a powerful influence on kids’ lives.”

According to Epperson, their church building is quite small, which adds a challenge to their ministry. He explains he conducts two services to accommodate the 50 to 70 or so who attend each Sunday morning. On Wednesdays, about 30 to 40 kids, ages 5-13, attend the evening service, with about 30 older youth attending a Thursday evening service.

“More than half the kids who attend midweek services come from difficult backgrounds involving drugs or broken homes,” Epperson says. “We have an old van that we go out and pick them up in, with others catching rides with staff-member families.”

Epperson is also quick to thank Pastor Perry Kallevig and Harvest Church in Elk Grove, Calif., which consistently offers its generous support.

“Pastor Perry often tells me to just let them know if we need anything,” Epperson says in obvious appreciation. “For example, every year they make it possible for our men to attend events that they couldn’t otherwise afford. They watch out for us and really help us out.”

Kallevig says that coming alongside the Eppersons and King’s View AG—as well as other community churches—is something Harvest Church enjoys.

“It really has been our privilege to partner with Dan and Colleen as they minister in Ione,” Kallevig says. “I have the utmost admiration for them—they have really made a difference. We believe in the local church and coming alongside local

church pastors, encouraging them and supporting them in any way we can.”

It’s fair to say that most of Ione knows about King’s View AG and Pastor Epperson by one name or another, but perhaps nothing speaks more highly of a church’s reputation than when people back up their opinion with their hard-earned cash. And the community does!

“Every year we do kids camp and teen camp and a summer trip with the kids,” Epperson says. “Most of them can’t afford the cost, so we have a volunteer worker, Debbie Gonzales, who goes door-to-door asking for donations to help send these kids to camp. The community knows what we’re doing, and they give so the kids can go. Twenty to 50 kids attend each of the camps and come with us on the trip, most of them on scholarships from the money donated by the community.”

Small church building. Small church membership. A name many people forget ... but a sterling reputation that is subtly and not-so-subtly helping King’s View AG impact its community for Christ today and tomorrow.

For more information about King’s View AG, see its [Facebook page](#).