

Making a Positive Difference . . .

By Randy Phillips, Washington, MO

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To The Editor:

My wife and I attended the Washington River Festival and Clean Up April 17 at Rennick Park. It was an inspiring event.

It was hard to miss all the great volunteers in their muddy boots and dirty clothes sorting through the massive amount of refuse that they had collected that morning from a 10-mile stretch of the Missouri River.

It occurred to us that these were people who were "for" something. They weren't just bellyaching about what they oppose. They weren't making fiery speeches to angry crowds. They weren't marching in the streets carrying offensive signs. They weren't looking for media attention. They did not need clever talking points from a Washington think tank or a boisterous radio talk-show host. They were rolling up their sleeves and doing the dirty work that needs to be done to make things better - for all of us - regardless of ideology. And they were doing it without fanfare.

So much of the activism we see today revolves around what people oppose. Some are against taxes. Some oppose government. Some don't like President Obama. Some reject climate science and are against regulation. But aside from their vague references to liberty and the Constitution, they don't seem to actually be "for" anything. As best I can tell the one common characteristic that unites them all is their collective against-ness.

Sadly, mobs of people will turn out at these events to let everyone know loudly and clearly and in no uncertain terms what makes them angry about the world. But most don't really "do" any more than that.

By comparison, the River Festival and Clean Up was sparsely attended, and the few who did participate were quietly going about the business of making our community better, asking for nothing in return. I think that says a lot about where we stand as a people.

Hat tip to Gloria Attoun, Mike Smith and all the other volunteers who helped organize this event. Thank you for making a positive difference in the world without the drama.