

Community Marriage Initiative

promoting Healthy Marriages In New Hampshire

February – April 2005

DREAMS CAN COME TRUE



Our hopes and dreams for a better tomorrow will come true if we plan and work for their fulfillment

Making your dreams for a great marriage and family come true takes skill and some effort, but the pay-off is well worth the investment.

The benefits of a good marriage go well beyond a sense of personal happiness and fulfillment. It's a fact that married people are healthier, live longer, have higher incomes and are happier than those who are single or divorced. Children that come from stable two parent families generally do better in school and are less likely to be delinquent and more likely to have a successful marriage.

CMI BUILDING STRONGER MARRIAGES & FAMILIES

Community Marriage Initiative works to build stronger Families

CMI works with participating members of the "Faith Based Community," local and state agencies and organizations dedicated to promoting marriage and family in the state of New Hampshire. CMI's role is to help organize, resource and train the members of congregations to provide "Marriage Education" in the following areas: marriage preparation; marriage enrichment; and conflict resolution for troubled marriages, and for those who have been separated. Support groups are provided for individuals who have been divorced and widowed. The "Faith Based Community" provides the above services in the form of mentoring couples, small groups and seminar workshops. Childcare is provided by some of the participating congregations. Log on to our website healthyfamiliesnh.org and click on "Calendar" to see what programs, workshops and small groups are being offered in your community.

DON'T WANT TO MARRY A JERK?

Singles are finding it difficult to meet a soul mate for life

If you're single and desiring a relationship that will lead to marriage and fulfillment, you can assure success by obtaining "Marriage Insurance" — gaining relational skills and the wisdom to judge character. Families are an informal school where we learn relationship skills by observation. In this informal learning environment we assess what we like and don't like. Since all families do not possess the same relationship building skills, we take from our family school a mixed bag of skills and a set of expectations for our own relationships. Our expectations are seldom realized because we lack the knowledge and skills to bring them about. Unfulfilled expectations lead to frustration and unhappiness. The good news is that we can learn these skills and build fulfilling life-long relationships. This is becoming increasingly desirable because twenty-five years of research conducted by experts in the field of the social sciences show the nuclear family is the best environment in which to raise children.



No Jerk for This Girl!

Seminars like "How to Avoid Marrying a Jerk" provide participants with information on how to avoid a bad relationship and the how-to's for building a happy, lasting relationship. Anyone who has friends or children of dating age will benefit from this type of program.

Programs that teach communication skills and provide insight into the differences between the sexes help insure lasting romantic relationships. Though the majority of troubled marriages are restorable, it makes sense to begin a relationship with the skills that assure success.

MARRIAGE WEEK USA



Across the country more and more communities, congregations and individuals are using the week prior to Valentine's Day as an opportunity for a week-long celebration of marriage — a week that is becoming known as *Marriage Week USA*. And while the purpose of the week is to celebrate the importance of marriage to our communities, there are many ways it can be celebrated by couples. The following ideas were taken from the Smart Marriage website—www.smartmarriages.com:

The Wednesday night before Valentine's Day I challenged each person in the room to do something for their spouse that they had never done before. This had to be something that had never been requested of them, something original. The next week women came in smiling because the husbands had written poetry to their wives, purchased bubble bath gel with an invitation for a shared bath, one gentleman bought a poetry book and a single red rose, and wrapped them up with a sexy nightgown! and the list goes on. One woman took her husband's truck to have the tires rotated and oil changed, while another woman gave her husband a coupon book filled with 12 coupons. The coupons included a 15 minute back massage, a night out with the guys (only his married buddies), a shared Sunday of promised football game watching with his favorite snacks, a sexy night of your dreams, and one contained a coupon that promised one day without a "honey-do".

Check Our Web Site, healthyfamiliesnh.org, for more ideas on how you can celebrate *Marriage Week USA* as a couple, in your congregation or in the community.

GOOD NEWS

There is an end in sight -- a cure for the divorce epidemic

Marriage education is one of CMI's primary purposes. According to Diane Sollee, the founder and director of Smart Marriages, The Coalition for Marriage, Family and Couples Education, marriage education is a key ingredient for "living into" successful marriages. In talking about why Smart Marriages was founded, Diane stresses the importance of education and the fact that we can learn the skills so necessary to successful marriages and families:

(Exciting new research has identified what it takes to build strong, happy marriages and what is unique about the couples that stay together and stay in love.

It isn't that successful couples start out richer, better looking, more in love, or more passionate. It isn't that they have fewer differences or less to fight about. In fact, couples who stay together have the same number of disagreements as couples who divorce.

And they disagree about the same issues - money, kids, sex, housework, in-laws, and leisure time. The difference is in how they handle their disagreements and how they behave in ways that build long-term happiness and satisfaction.

The good news is that the behaviors - or skills - which provide this "relationship insurance" can be learned. Couples can unlearn behaviors that destroy love and replace them with behaviors that keep love alive.

The number-one predictor of divorce is the habitual avoidance of conflict.

Yet couples avoid conflict precisely because they believe it will cause divorce. It's like the cartoon where the couple says to the marriage counselor, "It's true, we never talk anymore. We figured out that's when we have all our fights."

We avoid conflict - in the beginning because we are so in love -- and so misinformed! We believe that "being in love" is about agreeing.

Later, we avoid conflict, because when we try to deal with our differences things get so out of hand and our fights are so unpleasant and upsetting that we simply shut down. Successful couples - the research shows - are those who know how to discuss their differences without letting them contaminate the rest of their relationship. We don't get married to handle conflict, but if a couple doesn't learn how to do that successfully, they won't be able to do all the other things they got married to do. Or, put another way, it's hard to take her out to the ball game if you're not speaking. We also need to realize that every happy couple will have approximately ten areas of disagreement that they will never resolve.

The divorce laws have it wrong. All successful couples have irreconcilable differences! Perpetual disagreements - like a bad knee or a chronic back - are part of every good marriage. Successful couples learn to dance in spite of their differences. If we switch partners we'll just get ten new areas of disagreement and sadly, some of the most acrimonious will be about the children from our previous marriages.

In addition to needing to learn skills for handling disagreements, we also have to learn to welcome and embrace change. When we marry, we promise to stay together till death we do part. We don't promise to stay the same! We need skills to integrate and negotiate new meaning and changes along the way.

The good news is that there are many different courses for learning the skills.... Couples can learn the skills at any stage - dating, engaged, as newlyweds, or after many years of marriage.)

(Taken from the Smart Marriages web site www.smartmarriages.com - "About Us")

ON THE LIGHTER SIDE Married States



Wife vs. Husband

A couple drove down a country road for several miles, not saying a word. An earlier discussion had led to an argument and neither of them wanted to concede their position. As they passed a barnyard of mules, goats, and pigs, the husband asked sarcastically, "Relatives of yours?" "Yep," the wife replied, "in-laws."

MARRIAGE SEMINAR

While attending a Marriage Seminar dealing with communication, Tom and his wife Grace listened to the instructor, "It is essential that husbands and wives know the things that are important to each other." He addressed the man, "Can you describe your wife's favorite flower?" Tom leaned over, touched his wife's arm gently and whispered, "It's Pillsbury, isn't it? The rest of the story gets rather ugly, so let's stop right here.

MARRIAGE POLICIES

Having a positive impact on marriages across the nation

Between January, 1986 and January of 2004, the clergy of 183 cities and towns in 40 states have adopted Community Marriage Policies (CMPs) with the laudable goal of building strong marriages and reducing the divorce rate in their churches and areas. A recent study published by the Institute for Research and Evaluation states, "The overall effect is modest but statistically significant and promising."

In June, 2003, twenty three pastors from Amherst, Milford and the surrounding area signed the first such policies in New Hampshire. In signing these policies, the pastors agreed to thirteen guidelines that include requiring preparation for marriage; providing marriage building and enrichment opportunities; training couples with solid marriages to work with those experiencing troubled marriages; providing support for couples in remarriages; and assisting healing and recovery for those who have lost a loved one due to death, divorce or separation. The following churches are signers of community marriage policies:

Amherst	
Amherst Christian Church	Messiah Lutheran
Christ's Church of Amherst	River of Life Christian Fellowship
First Baptist Church of Amherst	Souhegan Congregational Church
Household of Faith	St. Luke Anglican Church
Milford	
Church of Our Savior	Light of The World Christian Church
Christian Life Assembly of God	St. Patrick Catholic Church
First Baptist Church of Milford	United Methodist Church
First Congregational Church	
Manchester	
Covenant Christian Church	Hope Tabernacle
Southside Baptist Church	Church of God Victory Worship Center
Ste. Marie's Catholic Church	
Nashua	
Grace Fellowship	Trinity Baptist Church
Lyndeborough	
United Church of Lyndeborough	

CMI is currently assisting pastors in Nashua, Manchester, the Rochester-Barrington area, and the Tilton area, to create and sign Community Marriage Policies.

Community Marriage Initiative, (CMI) is a non-profit, faith-based organization established in August 2003 to help build a cultural foundation that supports marriage, family life and children in communities throughout the state of NH. If you would like more information about CMI or learn more about Community Marriage Policies and how you can get one created for your area, contact Ron Tannariello or Des Coffee at the CMI office at (603) 672-1541 or write us at 134 Hollis Rd., Amherst, NH 03031. www.healthyfamilies.org