

Head Start Healthy Marriage Newsletter

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Smart Marriages Annual Conference

The Coalition for Marriage, Family, and Couples Education will host its annual **Smart Marriages Annual Conference** July 6-12 at Shingle Creek Resort in Orlando, Florida. The week-long conference features workshops, roundtable discussions, exhibits, training institutes and plenary sessions.

Keynote speakers at the event include John Gray, author of *Mars and Venus in the Bedroom*, Gary Chapman, author of *The Five Languages of Apology*, and Stephen and Alex Kendrick, producers of the film *Fireproof*.

The general conference

Strengthening Families In Missouri



Enticing participants to undertake the burden of traveling up to two hours to attend a relationship seminar is one of the challenges Central Missouri Community Action (CMCA) has overcome to create a highly popular marriage program that reaches eight counties surrounding Columbia, Missouri.

As one of 24 healthy marriage grantees throughout the country, CMCA has tripled the number of new families in its program. The group helps participants navigate bus schedules, offers child care vouchers and gift card incentives, and pays for one night in a motel for some couples, in an effort to reach families who need help.

"We're driven by families," says Tera Rogers, assistant administrator of CMCA's Connecting for

online fee is \$365.

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For more information

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Children program. "We know that whether parents are married or not, they have a huge impact on their children. We want these parents to realize that even if they create just one positive memory for their child every day, they are planting an important and positive seed."

Currently CMCA offers two core programs: *Love's Cradle* which teaches the foundation of communication skills, and *How to Not Marry a Jerk or Jerkette* which focuses on the fundamentals of healthy relationships. In addition, participants are offered additional classes on a broad range of topics, including budgeting, job searching, anger management, and parenting.

Rogers said more than 34 couples recently attended a weekend retreat where small groups participated in two eight-hour days filled with discussions and activities.

"By the end of the weekend retreats, we see couples who didn't even sit by each other when the session started, begin to flirt with each other, hold hands, hug, smile, and laugh together," Rogers said. "I've heard women say that after the retreat they remember what they liked about their husbands when they married them."

Through the classes, parents begin to see how their behavior affects their children. "These parents have such tremendous success that it hooks them into wanting to repeat their experience," said Rogers. And for children, the benefits are overwhelming. One child said she'd noticed a difference in the way her parents talked to each other. "I didn't know my parents could actually talk to each other without yelling."

[For Information About CMCA Click Here](#)

Maricopa County Family Outreach

Using a beauty salon as a place to teach healthy marriage classes is one of the innovative strategies

Maricopa County Head Start employs to meet people where they are, both physically and emotionally.

At the local jail, in juvenile lock-up communities, and in apartment buildings and community centers countywide, parents are learning the basics of healthy relationships through Head Start's Para Las Familias program.

"Parents are a child's primary teacher," said Debbie Wiseman, Family and Community Partnerships Coordinator and Project Administrator of Para Las Familias. "Head Start focuses on children, but it also "is holistic, helping the entire family work together."

Through a three-tiered program, more than 1200 married and single parents have participated in the Para Las Familias over the past year. The parents have learned how to recognize harmful behavior, communicate more effectively, and practice skills needed to strengthen their families.

"We work with teen and adult parents," said Wiseman. "We bring in fathers, brothers, and uncles—whoever we can get—so we can improve relationships throughout the family."

Para Las Familias is based on the curriculum known as *Within My Reach*, and is taught by professional trainers from The Partnership, an organization working to improve the quality of life for families and communities.

Wiseman said that incarcerated youth are particularly receptive to the program and praise the techniques and skills they learn. One teenager wrote, "The workshop is very good and it helps us in different types of communication in our relationships and how to avoid problems and to be safer in our relationships and how to be better people." Another young, incarcerated teen said, "I liked the class because it's helping me control my anger."

Overall, Wiseman believes it's the solid partnerships that have made Para Las Familias successful. "We have quality trainers, a good collaboration with our service delivery partner, The

Partnership, a commitment to meet the needs of our families where they are located and very positive word of mouth recruitment by past participants."

[For Information On Maricopa County Head Start Click Here](#)