

Strengthening Refugee Marriages Newsletter

Feature: Next Steps

August 2003

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT:

The National Stepfamily Day picnic, sponsored by the Stepfamily Association of America (www.saafamilies.org), will be held on Saturday, Sept 13th. Some families are celebrating with a picnic in their backyard, while others are putting on community picnics at local parks.

Think about having a day in which our four sites have a family dinner night or family picnic day with our refugee families. What do we think and what would be a good date for this?

The National Association of Catholic Family Life Ministries (NACFLM) Conference (I would recommend individuals who are working with the Family Life offices attend) has some very interesting workshops being held that would be useful for our project. The title of the conference this year is "Many Threads," featuring Multicultural Ministry and Inclusive Community. Additional workshops include "The Life of Marriage: Education and Formation Throughout the Life Cycle," "Celebrating Diversity in Family," and "Making Room at Your Table: Strengthening Marriage & Families through Social Outreach."

Bill Coffin will be speaking at the NACFLM conference, in Houston on Friday, Sept. 26. To find out more about the conference go to the website: <http://www.nacflm.org/conference.html>.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Allentown, PA is planning a Coalition Building and Marriages Initiative conference on October 20-23, 2003. The first three days will provide an opportunity to get PREP training and the last day will be a one day coalition-building workshop.

Nashville, TN had a community forum on July 11, 2003, where representatives from an assortment of agencies and potential participants heard about the program and its goals.

Phoenix, AZ held their first community coalition forum on July 8, 2003. Twenty five community representatives attended who were interested in hearing more about the Healthy Marriage Initiative and have committed to being active members of this coalition.

St. Paul is working to create a strong relationship with the Somalian community in order to develop a referral system, support, and media attention to move the project forward. They are planning a community presentation and training for Somalian community members and elders to encourage community participation in this new opportunity.

FIRST QUARTERLY REPORT

In only three short months we have accomplished quite a bit and come a long way. With the first quarterly report completed it shows the enormous amount of work accomplished to date and how we intend to move this initiative forward quickly in each community. We can just imagine what the second quarterly report will bring. With all the sessions beginning in August and September, this is only the beginning of these projects. Our second quarterly report will be due October 15, 2003.



Cultural Adjustment Resources

- **Gwendolyn Cartledge.** Cultural Diversity and Social Skills, Understanding Ethnic and Gender Differences (1996). Champaign, IL. Research Press.
- **Maire Stedman.** The Refugee Skills Exchange Project.
- Cultural Adaptation, USA Life & Living: <http://immigration.about.com/cs/cultureadjustment>
- Center for International Faculty and Student Services: www.rci.rutgers.edu/~cifss/
- On the About network: marriage www.marriage.about.com/CS/Culturalaspects

SITE UPDATES

Allentown – Nancy Bucci - PREP

Allentown was able to train three couples in the PREP model. All three couples will serve the refugee populations in Spanish, Vietnamese, and English. Their corresponding county has already completed work on adaptations and translations in Spanish, and this will be a guide to help their adaptation for refugees populations. The first set of sessions will be held in August 2003. The Vietnamese PREP model, is taking a bit longer for adaptations, Allentown, hopes to launch in September 2003. Nancy has gained the assistance of a student-intern Maryanne Orloff, a senior at DeSales University, where she is majoring in Marriage and Family Studies.

Nashville – Guy Muhire - PAIRS/PEERS

Guy is working on community cooperation to best serve the African communities in Nashville. Guy had recruited four couples to become trainers for this initiative throughout the African community. Guy has also acquired the assistance of Garmai

Tokpah, a graduate social work student intern from Cumberland University, as well as other volunteers.

Phoenix – Jeanne Nizigiyimana - PREP

Phoenix has moved forward with a bang. Before leaving for Reno, Jeanne had recruited eleven couples throughout the African refugee communities to be the first trained as trainers in the PREP model. At a Refugee Marriage kick-off event on July 26, seventy-five refugees gathered to learn more about the program, and heard Senator Mark Anderson encourage and support the Strengthening Refugee Families Marriages Program.

St. Paul – Elaine Mueller –Family Wellness

St. Paul is working quickly to create adaptations to the Family Wellness Model for the Somalian community. Some additional assistance in adaptation is being provided by two Somalian women leaders from the community who were also trained in the Family Wellness Model. They are excited about providing a presentation, exercise, and learning session to the Somalian community leaders and elders at the end of August 2003. Additional follow-up sessions will be held for new participants in September 2003.



SMARTMARRIAGES CONFERENCE 2003

At the end of June many of us packed our bags and moved ourselves to Reno, Nevada, where we all had the opportunity to participate in the Smartmarriages Conference of 2003. Everyone who has been working on marriage-related issues over the past several years came together at the conference to share thoughts, ideas, research, and training in an open forum. Much of the information and research being conducted is based on the changing numbers of marriages, divorces, cohabitations, and out-of-wedlock births occurring throughout the United States. Some of the topics discussed at different sessions and workshops were divorce, sexuality, romance, infidelity, finances, premarital concerns and child wellbeing, family, and gender role confusion. An energetic, exciting conference, a bit overwhelming in length and information, but fulfilling by the end provided all of us with insightful suggestions, ideas, and a game plan for moving forward with energy and enthusiasm. Many returned home with a renewed sense of what this pilot program was all about.

Eleven individuals from four pilot sites attended the conference and were trained in one of the three selected models. These individuals were from a variety of ethnicities, backgrounds, and experiences. While attending this conference all site coordinators got an opportunity to meet with one another and share perspectives on their project's progress, concerns, and insights in to how these projects are being received by their individual communities. The overall experience was exciting, enjoyable and rewarding for all.

ITEMS TO LOOK INTO:

- Contact you local Cooperative Extension
- Write your Regional OOR Office
- Inquire in getting volunteers (Vista, Students, Regional Volunteer Network)
 - <http://www.voa.org/>
 - <http://www.religiousvolunteers.org/>
 - AZ: <http://www.volunteerphoenix.org/>
 - PA: <http://www.energizeinc.com/prof/dovia/pa.html> & <http://www2.cedarcrest.edu/studentaffairs/commserv/agencies.html>
 - MN: <http://www.volunteercvs.org/links.cfm>
 - TN: <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/volact/ovaagencies.html>
- See if you have a project for student intern to work on from the local universities
- Develop a training manual for your volunteers, mentors, or trainers

SITE VISIT DATES

October 27-28, 2003-Allentown, PA
December 11-12, 2003-Nashville, TN

November 13-14, 2003-Phoenix, AZ
January 8-9, 2003-St. Paul, MN

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