



March 2009

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Marriage Stimulus Package

A joke among friends became a way to enrich marriages for Richard Marks of Marriage for Life in Jacksonville, FL. After hearing news of the economic stimulus package, Rick told some friends that what America really needed was a marriage stimulus package. Rick spoke with his local Chick-fil-A operator who quickly saw the potential of the idea. Together they formulated a plan: Marriage for Life would give away 500 "Marriage Stimulus Packages" in Chick-fil-A bags filled with coupons from local businesses, marriage tips, info from Crown Financial, goodies from Chick-fil-A, a marriage enrichment class listing, a local pastor's sermon on marriage, a half-off (\$300) coupon to a marriage weekend for crisis couples, and information about the local CMI, Marriage for Life.

The Chick-fil-A operator then volunteered to host 50 couples in the store for a date night on March 24. The date night participants were treated to free food served with flowers and tablecloths, along with "4 Questions For Your Spouse" to help stimulate conversation among the couples sitting with each other. WinShape Retreat donated a weekend getaway as a door prize (along with other prizes from local businesses). Each couple received a free DVD of Fireproof, a local Catholic priest gave a humorous, entertaining performance, and a local musician played.

The positive response has been overwhelming. One date night participant wrote, "I wanted to thank you for Tuesday evening. My husband and I have been miserable and I was about to give up. I have been praying for our marriage but I was beginning to believe the message for me was to leave. We fought all the way to Chick-fil-A that night but have not had a screaming match since. I now feel God wants me to stay, no matter what."

By his work to leverage his community relationships and to cast the vision of what others could do to support marriage, Rick designed a tangible way to enrich the relationships in the Jacksonville area. He also earned local media attention: you can read the article and watch the video from First Coast News [here](#).

Executive Directors of Community Marriage Initiatives Come for Training

WinShape Retreat will host an intensive training for leaders of CMI's from around the country on April 19-21. The Community Mobilization Team of the Marriage CoMission has designed a special time of encouragement and learning for those shouldering the numerous responsibilities involved in strengthening marriage across the sectors of their communities. Some topics include "Maximizing Your Reach by Leveraging Your Resources," "Making the Most of Your Event," "Importance of Social Networking," "Fundraising in Tough Economic Times," and "Leveraging Your Relationship with the Marriage CoMission."

Some new high potential cities have been added through the Marriage CoMission's relationship with **Marriage Savers**. Cities that have signed a "Community Marriage Policy" already have a threshold of grassroots interest in improving the health of marriage and are great candidates for further resources and equipping.

Several of the sessions will be recorded in high definition and then uploaded on the **First Things First University** website for the Executive Directors to share with their teams. This training is part of the Marriage CoMission's ongoing support of CMI's.

Feedback from Recent *Reconciling Troubled Marriages Training*

At the March 11-13 *Reconciling Troubled Marriage Training*, Clint & Penny Bragg and Joe & Michelle Williams helped participants develop an action plan for a "first response team" for marriage in crisis in their church or community. The trainer-couples also explored issues to consider when ministering to separated couples, affordable resources for crisis situations, and a deeper understanding of the ministry of reconciliation.

Here is some feedback from participants:

- "Each session gave us the tools, which in turn gave us the confidence, in knowing that we COULD initiate a crisis marriage ministry at our church."
- "Learning how to "first" respond to a couple in crisis, and how to gently respond thereafter was really helpful."
- "The most important aspect (of the training) was realizing that reconciliation to God and meeting the spiritual needs of the couples in crisis are key."

Free Love Is Not So Free

by Jeff Fray

The Summer of 1969 was called the "Summer of Love," memorialized in our minds by Woodstock, a culminating event in the sexual revolution. It was in the 1960s that sexuality and commitment were unhooked. The idea of "free love" was released into the cultural consciousness, and significant cultural taboos and stigmas were torn down....the stigmas of being pregnant outside of marriage, of divorce, and of extra-marital sex. Levi's, Flower Children, Jesus Freaks, Psychedelics, Mary Jane, James Dean, and Rock 'N Roll are a collage of the cultural upheaval of the times. "Far out!" said the crowd.

But free love was not so free. [Continue reading here.](#)

Upcoming Events

AMFM Marriage & Family Ministry Training Conference

Phoenix, AZ: August 3-7, 2009

www.amfmconference.com

National Summit on Marriage, Parenting and Family at Hampton University

Hampton, VA: September 29-30, 2009

(More information coming soon.)

If you have any questions or needs, please contact Andrea Lee at andrea@marriagecomission.com or 404-775-8808.

Thanks,
Marriage CoMission