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**In This Issue**

[Convergence News](#)

[City News](#)

[Hampton Summit](#)

[Church Sector Events](#)



## How Can Communities Capitalize on the Marriage Index?

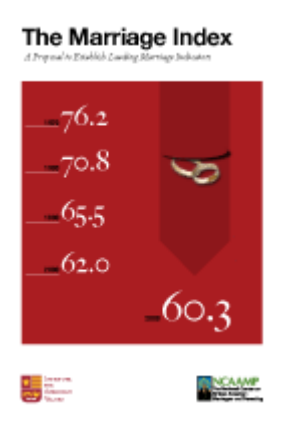
Syndicated columnist Maggie Gallagher describes the newly released [Marriage Index](#) as "a brilliant conceptual idea, long overdue. This is the GDP for marriage, a way to statistically sum up complex trends in a way that allows us to capture a core truth: Is marriage getting weaker or stronger?"

Many communities are asking the same question. The report lists 101 ideas for improving the nation's marriage index and five key ways that communities can leverage the report to revitalize marriages and families in their communities.

Here's the goal of improving the 5 leading indicators that measure the health of marriage:

- A greater proportion of adults realizing their dreams of enduring, happy marriages &
- A greater proportion of children growing up with their own two married parents.

For a great overview of the Marriage Index, read Maggie Gallagher's article [The Five Leading Indicators of Marriage](#)



## Awakening America Alliance

Important marriage and family prayer connections were made through the [Awakening America Alliance](#) on September 11th, when prayer gatherings

were held at 800 plus county courthouses in all 50 states and every large metropolitan area. This prayer covering for the Marriage CoMission's work involves more than 250 prayer networks and ministries agreeing together on "indicators" of Spiritual Awakening including:

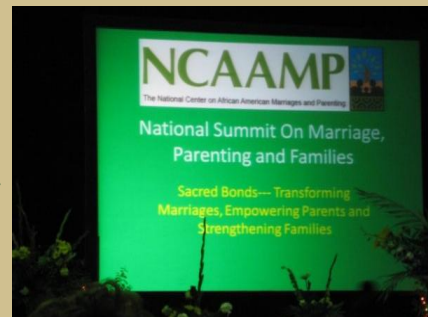


- A decrease in divorces and renewed commitment to marriage between a man and a woman in covenant relationship as God intends
- Imparting faith to children and youth, as parents are equipped by the church to become primary disciplers of their children
- Increased care for children as "gifts from the Lord" as the gospel addresses abortion, adoption, foster care, and child well-being.
- Righteous relations between men and women: decrease in divorce rates, cohabitation, same-sex relations, sexual abuse, sexual trafficking, out of wedlock children, and STDs

## National Summit on Marriage, Parenting and Families at Hampton University

Comments by Jeff Kemp, Chair of the Media Sector of the Marriage CoMission

On September 29-30, over 140 Americans planted an historic seed in the advancement of American families at the National Summit on Marriage, Family and Parenting. Led by Dr. William R. Harvey, President of Hampton University, a distinguished Historical Black College, and Dr. Linda Malone-Colon, Hampton Psychology Dept Chair and Executive Director of the [National Center on African American Marriages and Parenting](#), a national conversation about the status of marriage and family and commitment to ignite efforts to revitalize marriage and family was launched. Summit participants signed [The Hampton Proclamation](#), a proclamation inviting Americans to join in commitment to revitalize marriage and families, at the historic national symbol of freedom and hope, the Emancipation Oak Tree (location of the first reading of the 1863 Emancipation Proclamation in the South). A scholarly report, The Marriage Index, was also released and



proposed as an annual national measurement of the leading marriage indicators (based on the premise that the condition of America's families, children and civil health is at least as dependent upon the health of marriage as it is upon our nation's leading economic indicators).

This summit was very significant for all who attended. For me, its significance was heightened in that it represents a part of living a legacy that has been passed on from my father Jack Kemp, who passed away this last May. Less than a year earlier, I brought Dad with me to a planning session for this marriage summit. My dad lived his whole life with an ever-growing passion

for civil rights, economic empowerment and ownership opportunity for African Americans. When the idea of an inaugural national summit on African American marriage and parenting was proposed, Dad exhorted the assembled leaders to go a step further and lead our whole nation by convening a summit on all



American marriages and families, even as The Center focused on the Black family. Dr. Colon invited me to help her co-emcee the event and I count it an honor and progression in the legacy of my father to serve with and follow the national leadership of this cohort of largely African American leaders in an American Marriage and Family Movement.

To read more about the National Summit or the National Center on African American Marriages and Parenting please visit <http://www.hamptonu.edu/ncaamp/>

## Church Sector Events

WinShape Retreat hosted two strategic Church Sector events in September: THIRST, a gathering of next generation youth leaders, and Shepherd's Care, a gathering of pastoral care providers and denominational leaders.

The THIRST conference included over 70 national youth leaders including Ron Luce with Teen Mania, Jay Strack with Student Leadership University, Bo Boshers with the Willow Creek Association and Paul Fleischmann with the National Network of Youth Ministries. The specific focus was on preparing youth with a Biblical worldview and relational skills for lifelong commitment to marriage and family as God intends.

THIRST Highlights:

- Visit [www.myimpactexperience.com](http://www.myimpactexperience.com) for an overview of three years of curriculum based on student lessons in the Impact Bible.

- Visit [www.tosavealifemovie.com](http://www.tosavealifemovie.com) to find a free screening of the new teen movie *To Save a Life* to be released January 2010 from Outreach (distributor of Fireproof). This movie is a realistic portrayal of the teen crisis and dysfunctional family life in America, coupled with a winsome portrayal of the hope Jesus provides.

The Shepherd's Care conference focused on the connection between healthy clergy families, healthy churches, and ongoing marriage and family ministry in communities. Pastors and their families have a tremendous role to play in modeling healthy marriage, casting vision and then supporting marriage and family ministry in the local church. Denominational representatives who focus on pastoral health were in attendance from many denominations as the group focused on a continuum of specific strategies that could be incorporated into their work serving pastors and their marriages and families. Many of these "Shepherd Care Strategies" are being incorporated into the 2010 work plan of the Church Sector.

#### Shepherd's Care Highlights:

- Paul Cowell from Whitestone Country Inn briefed the participants on the [Christian Hospitality Network](#) which provides information on bed and breakfast locations across the nation that have special pricing to support pastor/missionary couples.
- A Lilly Foundation grant program focusing on peer support clusters, [SHAPE \(Sustaining Health and Pastoral Excellence\)](#) was highlighted by Ryan Chapman, Church of God Anderson, IN.
- Dr. Bob Reccord, former Executive Director of the Southern Baptist North American Mission Board, and his wife Cheryl, shared strategies for addressing the challenging moral/ethical times in which pastor-families seek to lead.
- A Fuller Theological project on better preparing seminarians regarding marriage was presented by Sharon Hargrave.

-David Ferguson, Chair of Church Sector of Marriage CoMission

If you have any questions or needs, please contact Andrea Lee at [andrea@marriagecomission.com](mailto:andrea@marriagecomission.com) or 404-775-8808.

Thanks!  
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