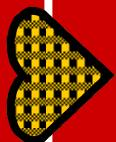




NEW MEXICO MARRIAGES FIRST PROJECT PRESENTS:

MARRIAGE LIFE LINE!



Looking Back on 2007!

(Written by Leonie Oliva)

As the year draws to a close it's a good time to reflect on the health of your relationship over the last 12 months. How has your marriage been? Has it survived or thrived? There inevitably have been ups and downs; good times and the not so good times; and maybe even disasters. But how have you and your spouse come through it all?

Have the knock downs and draw backs pushed you apart or brought you closer together? Are there areas where you feel you have been really successful in taking your marriage to another level or overcoming an issue or problem? Are there areas where you feel you still have a long way to go in seeing eye-to-eye or resolving a situation? Did you seek advice or marital education to help you enrich your relationship or did you just do the best with what you knew how to do? Overall, was it a good year for your marriage, just so-so, or one of the worst?

Whatever your situation, the end of the year is a good opportunity to have an honest relationship evaluation session with your spouse so that you can:

- Share your feelings on how the last 12 months of your relationship went;
- Discuss what worked well and what did

not work so well;

- Share what you appreciated most about your spouse during the year and thank them for that;
- Consider the relationship lessons you have each learned from the last year;
- Identify and celebrate your successes; and
- Plan what you can do more of, or do differently from your 2007 relationship to make sure that 2008 is a great year for your marriage.

Think of this as a "marriage maintenance health check". Normally, we get our teeth checked, our cars serviced, and a physical check up with the doctor on a regular basis. It only makes sense to do the same with your marriage – it is after all the biggest investment you will ever make in your life, with potentially the greatest return! Enjoy this issue of the Marriage Life Line as we talk about "Marriage Maintenance!"



Announcing: A Growing Marriage Conference (See Page 4 for Details)



Inside this issue:

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Upcoming events to plan for:

January 12, 2008: Marriage Mentor Training

January 19, 2008: A Growing Marriage Conference

February 2008 - Premarital Classes at the Pueblo of Jemez

March 1, 2008 - 007 Bond Your Marriage

Why Do We Need Marriage Maintenance?

(Written by Michael Holland)

The other day, I was working on my car and getting pretty frustrated that it was taking so long to repair. I had other things on my "to do" list and I just wanted to get it fixed and move on. Then, I realized that in order to keep the thing running the way I want, I needed to do a better job of maintenance on it! I couldn't expect it to run forever without it needing a little attention from time to time. I quickly drew the comparison between cars and marriages - I mean, after all, I am a man and we understand things from this perspective!

How many times in our marriages do we expect them to "run" forever without doing a little maintenance on them? We get married, have kids, grow our careers, get involved in volunteer activities and before you know it, we have been married for several years and done nothing to build a healthy relationship. In most cases, our marriages are the last thing we think about that need our attention. We take the relationship for granted and think that it will be "fine." How many of you would ignore your oil light in your car thinking that it will run forever without attention? If you have, you quickly find out that without oil, your engine will explode - kind of like our marriages do when the "red light" comes on and we ignore them.

In our sessions with couples, we will hear many of them say, "We don't know how we ended up here. We were so happy when we married and now, our relationship is a mess!" When we hear

this, Rebecca and I use an analogy that seems to really connect with couples. We ask them if they would begin a road trip in Los Angeles and drive all the way to New York City without taking one stop? They usually chuckle saying that they would need to stop and go to the bathroom or eat or sleep at some point. We agree with them; they would need to stop along the way to take care of themselves in order to make the trip. We continue by asking them what would happen if they ran into a snow storm in Colorado and the roads became icy and they continued to drive 70 miles per hour. Again, they chuckle and say, "That would be about the stupidest thing we could do! We would end up sliding off the road or spinning frantically on the highway. We would definitely have some sort of accident!" After they have imagined this picture and the specifics of the trip, we connect the road trip to their marriage. We talk about how many couples marry and expect to go their whole lives without taking care of the relationship. They expect that their marriage will run for 600,000 miles without an oil change or a tune up. We emphasize the importance of maintenance in anything we do in life and express that marriage is no different.

As we enter a new year, think about your own relationship. Does your marriage need a tune up? Have you "changed the oil" in it lately? If not, check out our calendar of events on page 7 of this newsletter and plan to do a little "marriage maintenance" in 2008 so you won't find yourself "off the road" in your relationship!



Michael Holland,
Assistant Project
Director



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DOES YOUR MARRIAGE NEED A LAUGH?



New Mexico Marriages First

**Project
(NMMFP)
exists to:**

**Provide
culturally
appropriate
marriage
education,
marriage
enrichment
projects, and
programs that
explore positive
relationship
models for
married couples,
engaged couples,
couples interested
in marriage and
teenagers thus
strengthening
marriage and
reducing the
incidence of
divorce.**

*The
NMMFP
Motto:
"I Do! I Did? I
Will . . .
For LIFE!"*

Recounting a Matrimonial Priority

(Written by Mike Gibson)

I recently had the opportunity to meet with a married couple in Albuquerque. The husband is a police officer and the lady is a stay at home mother and home maker. I have known the husband since the 1990s when I served with a local police agency. I know him to be a fine man with a high degree of integrity; an exceptional peace officer and public servant. I had met his wife in the past but did not know her very well. Through my contacts with the police community and my position with NM Marriages First, the husband contacted me and asked if I could meet with him and his wife regarding potential mentoring sessions. I knew from experience that police officers were prone to reach out only to a fellow officer or someone related to the law enforcement community with their personal or family issues. He did not want to meet at our office but preferred to meet at their home and wanted all topics discussed to remain strictly confidential; again a trait that is typical to law enforcement personnel. I met the couple at their home and my first impression was very positive. Their home was beautiful; their young children appeared happy, loved and well mannered. Honestly, I was expecting to see the couple with distressed faces and in unquestionable need in resolving an issue in their marriage. Instead, I found them to be generally happy and sincerely considerate to each other. I was puzzled with what I was seeing. It did not look like a relationship in trouble. We sat around the kitchen table and had coffee. There was not much of an ice breaker or pleasantries involved; the husband immediately looked at me, smiled confidently and said, "Mike, would you please tell my wife how in some careers and especially as a police officer, the job takes priority over all, even her?" I looked at him without hesitation and said, "I can't say that because there is nothing including your job that should ever take priority over your wife. She should always be your number one priority." Caught off guard again I looked across the table at the wife who had begun to cry. I explained to both of them that I could see where the husband believed this idea to be true as a police officer because this idea is engrained into most police officers, and many officers prioritize their lives the same way. I explained to the wife that if this same topic had been brought up ten years ago to me, I may have very well agreed with him. When we were nearing the end of our talk, we were all in tears - the two of them over the issue at hand, me recounting in the back of my mind, my own matrimonial shortcomings from the past, and the

man, now agreeing and admitting his ego and priorities were out of order, vowed to his wife to change them. This was a sight to see. I could not believe how easily he had changed his way of thinking from just a short conversation involving a third party whom he trusted. I was truly impressed by this guy! The wife, now smiling, ended by saying, "This seemed to be our only issue, and we could not seem to overcome it." She added that they had a very happy and content relationship that they both considered to be healthy and strong. As I was leaving both relayed to me to forget about the mentoring idea. They both felt they could work things out from here. I was so pleased they had taken this step to enhance their marriage. Of course, I felt on top of the world! I asked them both at a later date if I could use the conversation in an article and they gave their permission excluding the use of their names.

Priorities that are out of order in a marriage are an issue we see often at NM Marriages First. I personally challenge each of the men who are reading this article to review the order of their matrimonial priorities. I encourage the women to do the same. If you find your wife or husband is not listed as your number one priority, then you have an issue in your marriage that needs attention. Remember this particular couple only needed one "impromptu" session to resolve their issue. There is assistance available at no cost through NMMFP or from another source of your choice, such as clergy. The important factor is to take action soon for the sake of your marriage and your family. If your spouse is number one on your priority list, then you are on the right track! Take it from someone who had to learn the hard way...more than once.

(Mike Gibson is retired from the NM State Police and has been married to his wife Dawn for 30 years.)

**Mike Gibson,
Office & Public
Relations Manager**



Contact NMMFP if you would like to schedule a marriage event in your community!!

1207 Golf Course Road, Ste. E
Rio Rancho, New Mexico 87124
Phone: (505) 891-1846
Cell: (505) 401-5734 or
400-9869
Email:
mholland@nmmarriagesfirst.org
rholland@nmmarriagesfirst.org

Marriage Quote

"Love at first site is easy to understand; it's when two people have been looking at each other for a lifetime that it becomes a miracle."

Amy Bloom



Tony Oliva,
Executive Director

A Growing Marriage Conference

(Written by Michael Holland)

A *Growing Marriage Conference*, led by Dr. Gary Chapman, author of the best-selling book, *The Five Love Languages*, is not a formal, dry, marriage seminar - it's a time of fun and discovery to help you build the love relationship of your dreams. Whether you're getting married in 3 months - or have been married 30 years, you'll get solutions you can use. With biblical advice and a healthy dose of laughter, Dr. Chapman will give you valuable tips to break unhealthy patterns and to choose steps to develop a honoring, happy marriage.

Couples, both married and engaged, will benefit from practical sessions addressing such topics as: communication differences, dealing with criticism, understanding love "languages", and making sex mutually fulfilling. Join us for a day that will be a

highlight for your marriage!

What attendees say about

A Growing Marriage:

"...simple, practical advice with great humor..."

"...the whole thing is powerful, informative, and holds your interest..."

"...really, it's the best conference I've ever attended!"

This conference will be held on January 19th at Hoffmantown Church, located at 8888 Harper Drive, NE, Albuquerque, New Mexico. Tickets are \$35 per person and can be purchased at the church or by going on line to www.hoffmantown.org. The seminar begins at 9:00 am and ends at 3:30 pm. Lunches can be purchased for \$5 when registering for the conference. For more information, contact Amy Cook at 505-858-8620. Don't miss your chance to attend this incredible seminar.

One Little Thing

(Written by Tony Oliva)

Suppose you were given a divine assignment. Imagine that one morning, while you were driving down the road, your car floated up into the clouds and a deep voice told you, "*You are being given a new purpose in life.*" Your pre-existing missions, whatever they were, had now been superseded by the following directive: **make your partner happy**. Imagine that the same deep voice explained that you would be richly and extravagantly rewarded for your efforts, if successful, but there were some rules you had to follow. Your efforts at expanding your partner's happiness could not be self-defeating - you would not be allowed to diminish your own happiness in the attempt. Nor could your efforts be so dramatic that your partner would say "What's this all about? What has happened to you?" You would have to become a **stealth happiness-generator**. You would be permitted to invest any amount of time, energy, or attention for this mission, but your budget for it would not be allowed to exceed what you spend on lunch everyday. And one last requirement, you could never talk to your partner about your mission directly, not even a little hint. Just for a minute or two, think about what you would do. Seriously, stop, right now..... and just think! How could you expand your

partner's happiness, using nothing more than your resourcefulness and your lunch money? You can't solve all his or her problems and you cannot change his or her past. You can only do some, or maybe lots, of little things. What could you do? What would increase your partner's happiness? You may not have the power to dramatically change much that causes your partner stress and strain in life, but that doesn't mean you are altogether powerless. You can use **words** to speak your heart. You can use **flowers** as a symbol. You can use **music** as a message. You can use **objects** made from pipe cleaners, post-it notes, and articles clipped from the newspaper. You can send an **email**, sing a **song**, do an unexpected **chore**, invest in a mushy Hallmark **card**. Don't throw your hands up in despair when you can't make major changes in the happiness quotient of your marriage overnight. Instead, embrace the power of **the little things** and do one every day without fail.

Why? Because you're on a mission.

"...embrace the power of the little things, and do one every day without fail."

Looking Forward to 2008!

(Written by Rebecca Holland)



**Rebecca Holland,
Project Director**

*New Mexico
Marriages First
Project Staff:*

**Tony Oliva,
Executive Director**

**Rebecca Holland,
Project Director**

**Michael Holland,
Assistant Project
Director**

**Mike Gibson,
Office and Public
Relations Manager**

**Leonie Oliva,
Project and Events
Coordinator**

**Anita Bruce,
Accountant**

**Brad Biggers,
IT Support**

**Lois Coleman,
Receptionist/Librarian**

(505-891-1846)

Holidays are about stirring up our emotions. Think about the reason for the season. Listen to the music. Watch the children. "It's the hap - happiest time of the year". Or is it?

Couples can find this time of the year to be very trying. The hustle and bustle, holiday expectations, time spent celebrating and even difficult schedules can play a big role in how couples view the holidays. It can be very frustrating, even maddening trying to coordinate family events around the limited time we have with everyone.

So, how do couples pull through the holidays? First, we remember the reason for the season - what is this time of year all about? Second, we keep in mind that the decisions we make today will impact our tomorrow. Third, we practice flexibility and fourth, we anticipate the New Year. Every year, I am amazed at how much attention Christmas gets and how little preparation goes into planning for the New Year. One way to anticipate the New Year is to look back on years that have passed and decide what you will do differently.

There was a time in my marriage when things were not so good and I considered divorce as a way to solve the problem. I spent so much time thinking about what I didn't like and how much my husband didn't meet my needs, that I became frustrated and extremely unhappy. The holidays became just another stressful time with no positive outlook on how things could be different in the New Year. I remember the year it changed for me. It was Christmas 1991 and Michael and I had been remarried on December 5th after being separated for 5 months. I began to reflect on what the holidays were all about and realized that I had "missed it" for so many years. I had focused on the material things involved in the season and had neglected the precious gift of family and friends. I had gotten all wrapped up in "getting what I wanted" for Christmas that I forgot it was a time to give and express my gratitude for those in my life. I suddenly "got it" for the first time! I got that we are given a gift at this time of year to reflect on so many things and to decide what we want to happen in the New Year. I no longer take this time of year from granted. I receive the gift that it is and anticipate what I want for the New Year.

Being married has heightened my awareness of how precious time is. The longer I am married and the faster time passes, the more I realize that each moment is the beginning of a new tomorrow. I believe this has taught me not to take time together for granted. How will my marriage prosper and grow healthier in 2008? How will I make my spouse a priority? How will I make sure I do not neglect the little things and focus on the things that will bring me closer to my spouse? What resolutions or goals can I make for my marriage? What do I need to change in who I am to be the best wife I can be?

2008 can be the best year for your marriage. It can be a year where you prioritize your spouse and decide that you will lay down all the "junk" from the past and start new. You can draw a line in the sand and say goodbye to all the pain of the past and start fresh. It can be a year of making good choices and creating the marriage you want. It can be a year when you do "marriage maintenance" to keep your relationship in the best condition possible!

Let's look forward to 2008 being a year that is *GREAT*.

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Keep the Christmas Spirit and Have a Happy New Year

(Written by Leonie Oliva)

***“On the First Day of Christmas
my true love sent to me a
partridge in a pear tree....”***

Although a partridge in a pear tree may not be a particularly useful gift “it’s the thought that counts” as they say! By the time you read this newsletter Christmas may well be over. We hope you had a wonderfully festive family time. Now as we look ahead in to January, and the festivities come to an end, sometimes we can feel a little flat and unmotivated. If that’s the case, make sure that feeling does not affect your relationship. To get your New Year off to a romantic start try the following game with your spouse to maintain the holiday cheer and to keep the Christmas spirit of giving alive – it’s called the First Day of January game.....

1. Pick a start date – any day, it doesn’t have to be the first day of January.
2. Pick a time of the day when you and your spouse can have 10 – 15 minutes of undisturbed time together.
3. At that time each day, for 12 days, sit down

together and present each other with a small token gift – this could be a physical gift like a candy, a flower or a card you have made; it could be an action like a 2 minute back or foot rub or a huge hug; or it could be reading them a special poem or singing a song (if your partner likes the sound of your voice!).

4. Continue for 12 days, remembering that if you follow the example of the song, the gifts are cumulative i.e. if your gift to your true love on day one was a chocolate kiss, on day two it will be a two minute back rub and a chocolate kiss, and so on.

***“On the second day of Christmas
my true love gave to me two
turtle doves and a partridge in a
pear tree....”***



**Leonie Oliva,
Project and Events
Coordinator**

“Laugh Your Way” Events Very Successful

(Written by Rebecca Holland)

During the month of October, the NMMFP brought two wonderful events to the Pueblo of Jemez and Albuquerque: Laugh Your Way to a Better Relationship and Laugh Your Way to a Better Marriage with Mark Gungor. Over 612 people attended the two events and everyone raved about how wonderful Mark was and how impacting his presentations were. Mark has a way of connecting with people that is amazing. Men hear things from him that they would never hear from other presenters and women really appreciate the simplicity of his message. Laughter was inevitable as Mark talked about the differences between men and women and compared men’s “boxes” to women’s “wires”. When Mark talked about the way men and women use words differently, the crowds roared and it was obvious that everyone was identifying with his points. The participant evaluations were overwhelmingly

positive and everyone wanted to see Mark brought back to the communities to continue relationship/marriage education.

The NMMFP’s goal is to provide three marriage enrichment events per year. These events focus on marriage education in a way that reaches as many couples as possible in a light-hearted, humorous way. Keep on the look out for our next event, Romance and Roses, that will take place in the Spring of 2008.

“Mark has a way of connecting with people that is amazing. Men hear things from him that they would never hear from other presenters and women really appreciate the simplicity of his message.”



**Mark Gungor,
Laugh Your Way to a
Better Marriage**



CALENDAR OF MARRIAGE EVENTS

Join Us for the NMMFP "Healthy Marriage Moment" Radio Show on Sunday mornings from 8:30 to 9:00 am on KKIM Radio AM 1000, FM 97.4 or www.kkimam1000.com

January 2008

New Mexico State University is offering a **FREE 12-week enrichment program for parents raising children.** Topics covered include: Parents as leaders and models, Family communication and conflict resolution, Skills and strengths for step-families and extended families. Classes begin in January and meet ONE night per week 5:30-8:00pm. Call (505) 332-3765 to reserve your space!

NMMFP Marriage Mentor Training, January 12, 2008 from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm. Contact New Mexico Marriages First, 1207 Golf Course Road, Suite E, Rio Rancho, New Mexico to Register (505-891-1846) ***Training is FREE!!***

A Growing Marriage Conference with Dr. Gary Chapman (author of The Five Love Languages), January 19, 2008, 9:00 am to 3:30 pm at Hoffmantown Church, 8888 Harper Drive NE, Albuquerque, NM. Tickets are \$35 per person. To purchase tickets, go on line to www.hoffmantown.org

February 2008

NMMFP Premarital Education Classes at the Pueblo of Jemez, Thursday evenings beginning February 7-28, 2008, 7:00 - 9:00 pm. Contact New Mexico Marriages First, 1207 Golf Course Road, Suite E, Rio Rancho, New Mexico to Register (505-891-1846) ***CLASSES ARE FREE!!***

March 2008

007 - Bond Your Marriage, Saturday, March 1, 2008, 9:00 am - 5:00 pm. Church Alive! 4601 Avocet NE, Albuquerque, New Mexico
FREE Marriage Enrichment Event, which includes Childcare and Lunch!
To register call 505-891-1846.

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New Mexico Marriages First Project
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*Your Winter Marriage
Life Line Newsletter
Is Inside!*

To:

*Mark Your Calendar and Plan to Attend
"A Growing Marriage Conference"
Featuring Dr. Gary Chapman,
Hoffmantown Church on January 19, 2008!*

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