

Mississippi

Healthy Marriage Week

February 7-14, 2009

What is Healthy Marriage Week?

National Marriage Week was started in 1996, in the U.K. by Richard Kane. In February of 2002, Brent Barlow and Diane Sollee launched "Marriage Week USA." Marriage Week USA has since been referred to as Healthy Marriage Week. The goals of Healthy Marriage Week are to celebrate successful, long-lasting marriages, raise public awareness about the benefits of healthy marriage to children, adults, and the community, and to provide information about resources for premarital preparation and marriage enrichment. Numerous states across the country will celebrate Healthy Marriage Week February 7 – 14, 2009, including Mississippi.

Why Celebrate Healthy Marriage Week in Mississippi?

Currently, Mississippi ranks 50th out of 50 states regarding overall child wellbeing (www.kidscount.org), much of which can be attributed to the breakdown of the traditional two-parent household. Only 55% of children in Mississippi live in a married-couple household, and many children live in single-parent households. Children with divorced or never married parents are much more likely to experience poverty, abuse, and behavioral and emotional problems, have lower academic achievement, and use drugs more often. Children of single mothers have lower grades and educational attainment than children who grow up with married parents, and children of divorce are less likely to graduate and attend college (Hymowitz, 2006).

Conversely, children of married couple families are less likely to live in poverty (Hymowitz, 2006), shown to have better health, less likely to be depressed, less likely to repeat a grade in school, and have fewer developmental problems (Heritage Foundation). Marriage also appears to reduce the risk that children and adults will be either perpetrators or victims of crime. Further, married adults are more productive at work, and are healthier than divorced, widowed or never married adults (CDC, 2004). Thus, for the sake of adult and child well-being, public awareness should be raised regarding the benefits of healthy marriage to children, adults, and the community. In addition, resources should be provided to foster healthy marital relationships.

We will celebrate Healthy Marriage Week through the following activities:

- Holding a statewide press conference on the steps of the capitol on February 12, 2009 to recognize successful long lasting marriages in our community, and highlight the importance of healthy marriages for Mississippi.
- Encouraging clergy to sign the Mississippi Marriage Covenant, in which clergy agree to provide premarital education to couples before marrying and offer other marriage education resources.
- Raising awareness of the public about the importance of healthy marriage through radio public service announcements, TV commercials, TV interviews, newspaper articles, and our website, www.MarriageMississippi.com.
- Conducting marriage seminars and healthy-marriage activities throughout the state of Mississippi during and after Marriage Week, using the *10 Great Dates* program (visit our website, www.MarriageMississippi.com for more information).