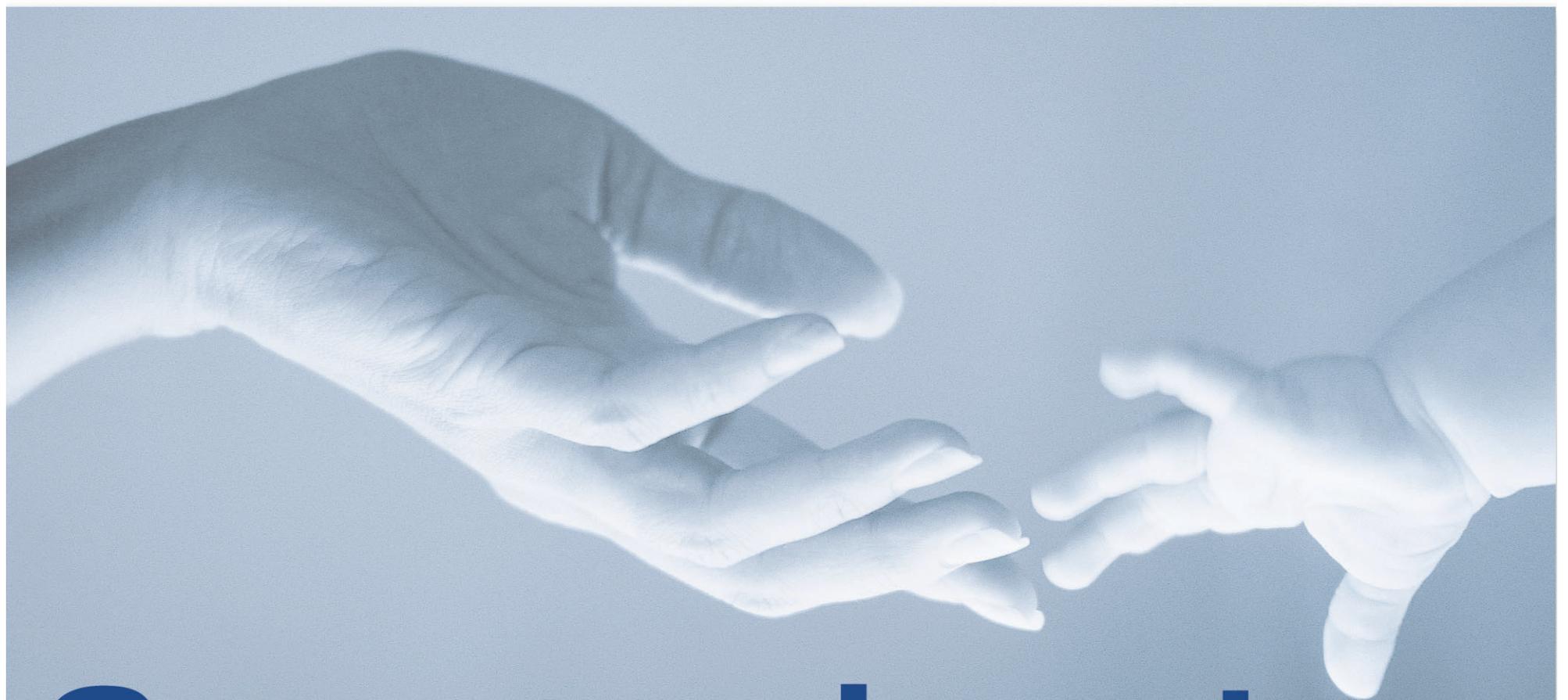
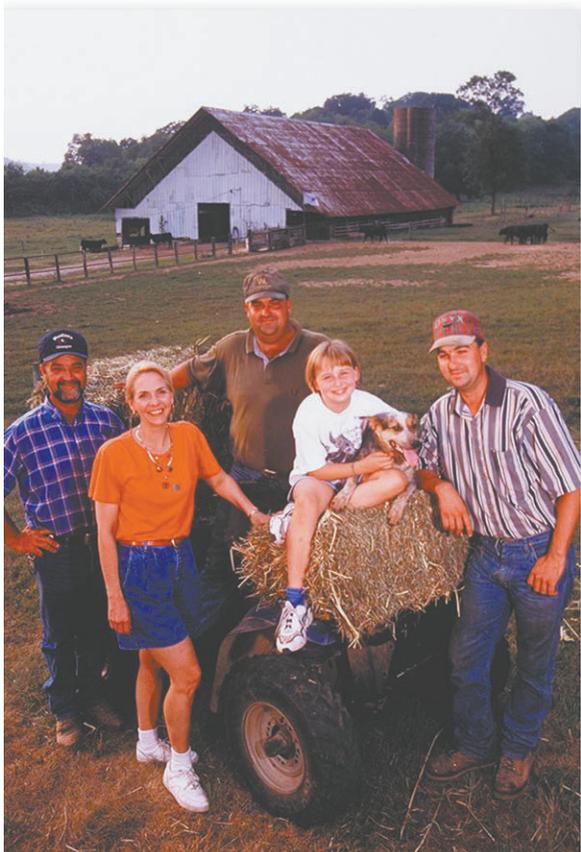


**Celebrating Parents' Day 2004**



**Strengthening**

**America's  
Children  
AND  
Families**



**A SPECIAL REPORT BY THE NATIONAL PARENTS' DAY COUNCIL**

**A PROJECT OF THE AMERICAN FAMILY COALITION**

# Parents' Day: History and Highlights

By Gary Jarmin

**O**n October 14, 1994, President Bill Clinton signed into law the resolution unanimously adopted by the U.S. Congress that established the fourth Sunday of every July as Parents' Day. The initiative to establish

a new day of commemoration to honor and uplift the important role of parents in raising their children began in 1993 as the outcome of a broad-based interfaith, bipartisan and multiracial coalition of religious, political and civic leaders who recognized that America's families were in crisis and that there was an urgent need to promote positive parenting in our society.

In the early 90's, numerous studies documented that most of America's social ills were directly caused by dysfunctional parenting and family breakup. The social scientific evidence was compelling and overwhelming: over one-third of America's children were born out of wedlock and nearly forty percent lived in single parent homes. Children in such homes were six times more likely to be poor and were more likely to be sexually abused, involved in criminal activity, do poorly in school, have emotional and psychological problems, abuse drugs and alcohol, have children out of wedlock and commit suicide.

The leaders of the Parents' Day movement recognized that the prophetic comments of former President Lyndon Johnson nearly two decades ago were sadly coming to fruition. In his 1965 speech to Howard University, President Johnson said, "The family is the cornerstone of our society. More than any other force it shapes the attitudes, the hopes, the ambitions, and the values of the child. And when the family collapses, it is the children that are usually damaged. When it happens on a massive scale the community itself is crippled." By 1993 in many of our nation's communities, President Johnson's warning had become a stark reality and the trends in family disintegration were getting worse. Clearly, something needed to be done.

Recognizing that families, centered upon loving and responsible parents, are the cornerstone of society, the National Parents' Day Coalition (NPDC) was formed for the purpose of passing a resolution

to establish the fourth Sunday of July as Parents' Day, a permanent, annual day of commemoration "for recognizing, uplifting, and supporting the role of parents in the raising of children." The NPDC, a project of the American Freedom Coalition (AFC), was Co-Chaired by Dr. Robert Grant, President of the AFC and Chairman of Christian Voice, Hon. Rev. Walter Fauntroy, noted civil rights leader, pastor and a former twenty-year member of the U.S. Congress, Dr. D. James Kennedy of Coral Ridge Ministries, Dr. Joseph Lowery, President of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, Dr. Cecil Murray, pastor of the First AME Church of Los Angeles and the Hon. Bob Wilson (R-CA), former member of Congress. The NPDC's National Advisory Board included numerous religious, political, civic and other NGO leaders in nearly all the fifty states who mobilized to make the idea of Parents' Day a reality.

Before Parents' Day was eventually passed into law, the process went through two legislative phases. Gary L. Jarmin, Political Director for the American Freedom Coalition and chief coordinator for the lobbying campaign, originally submitted draft language to Congressman Dan Burton (R-IN) to make Parents' Day a permanent day of commemoration. Before asking his colleagues to go the huge step of making this an annual occurrence, Congressman Burton wanted to determine if enough support existed in Congress for making Parents' Day a single, one-time only day of commemoration. Therefore, on August 4, 1993 Congressman Burton introduced H. Res. 236 "to declare July 28, 1994 be recognized as Parents' Day." After a successful grassroots lobbying campaign, primarily led and coordinated by the State Directors of the American Freedom Coalition, the Congress adopted the resolution on March 11, 1994.

The very first observance of Parents' Day (albeit a one-time only day of commemoration) was held on July 28, 1994 in a special recep-



Each year exemplary parents are honored in communities across the nation such as this family in Michigan



## Happy Parents' Day!

On behalf of the American Family Coalition, we would like to extend to you our greetings and best wishes! To celebrate the tenth anniversary of Parents' Day this year, we are pleased to present you our second annual Parents' Day publication.

It is our privilege to offer you in these pages the insights and opinions of distinguished leaders in the field of marriage, parenting, and the family. We trust that you will find the information and suggestions useful in your own homes and helpful to your own efforts to strengthen the most essential of all social units, the family.

The American Family Coalition has dedicated itself to the support and strengthening of the family. The strength of a nation is in the strength of its families. More than any other institution in society, the family is the transmitter of values, the safeguard of children, and an essential "school of love." The parental, conjugal, and filial love relationships within the family provide a model for every other relationship that an individual will enter into during the course of his life.

Parents' Day, the fourth Sunday in July, was created by act of Congress in 1994 to recognize and appreciate the contribution of parents to our nation's families. It also serves to remind us of our responsibility to this most important vocation. Just as we invest ourselves in our jobs and professional life, we need to make the same commitment to our families. If you have never celebrated Parents' Day in your home, church, synagogue, mosque, or community center, we hope that you will join us this year and help us to promote this most important day. For more information, please see the Parents' Day Web site at [www.parentsday.com](http://www.parentsday.com).

We are all aware of the challenges facing the family in contemporary society. Yet, despite the many efforts to remake the family or to undermine its significance, one fact remains clear. The two-parent family is still the best environment for nurturing our children and the best protection, the safest harbor, for our children's hearts and souls.

Our warmest wishes for a happy Parents' Day!

James P. Flynn  
President, American Family Coalition

**For information on Parents' Day, call (800) 304-3175**

tion in our nation's Capitol. Co-Chaired by Congressmen Dan Burton and Floyd Flake (D-NY), it was attended by over thirty members of Congress. The National Parents' Day Coalition honored many prominent celebrities in our society who had made enormous contributions in serving as positive parenting role models. Among some of those honored at the Capitol Hill event were actors Florence Henderson (The Brady Bunch), Barbara Billingsley (Leave it to Beaver) and Kirk Cameron (Growing Pains). Pops Staples of the Staple Singers was also honored and former recording artist Lola Falana accepted an award on behalf of Bill Cosby and Phylicia Rashad (The Cosby Show).

Based upon the tremendous success of this event and growing popular support for Parents' Day, on August 5, 1994 Congressmen Dan Burton and Floyd Flake introduced new legislation, H.J. Res. 398, to make Parents' Day a permanent, annual day of commemoration to be observed on the fourth Sunday of every July. However, before moving on to this next phase of making Parents' Day a permanent occurrence, a major hurdle had to be overcome: in 1986, key Congressional Committees established new rules to ban the passage of any future days of commemoration! Congress felt this process was being abused and wanted, once and for all, to halt the passage of many bills calling for establishment of unimportant or frivolous days of commemoration.

To overcome this enormous roadblock in its path, NPDC Co-Chair Rev. Walter Fauntroy convinced Congressman William Clay, Chairman of the Committee that had jurisdiction over the Parents' Day bill, to allow the legislation to be discharged from his Committee and brought to the House floor for a vote if it could get a minimum of 218 cosponsors, i.e., a majority of the House of Representatives. Miraculously, after only six weeks of a nationwide letter writing and lobbying campaign, 223 Congressmen agreed to sponsor the bill. Finally, on September 30, 1994, the House voted unanimously to pass the legislation creating Parents' Day. The Senate added its unanimous approval to the bill on October 4th and ten days later it was signed into law by President William Jefferson Clinton.

Once Parents' Day was officially established, the ad-hoc NPDC dissolved and was eventually replaced by the National Parents' Day Council, a project of the American

Family Coalition, as the premier, national organization to promote Parents' Day and other activities designed to celebrate and strengthen the traditional, two-parent family. It is the hope and vision of the National Parents' Day Council and the American Family Coalition that Parents' Day will not be perceived as primarily one more day to honor our nation's Moms and Dads but, more importantly, it will be observed as a day when parents honor their children by rededicating themselves to manifest the highest standard of unconditional, true love.

Among the many activities sponsored by the new NPDC and over forty state affiliated chapters is the annual selection of "Parents of the Year" at the local, state and national level. Annually, a Congressional Parents' Day Reception is held in our nation's capital to honor the National Parents of the Year and other outstanding couples who exemplify the highest standard of sacrificial love in raising their children to become virtuous, compassionate and productive members of our society. Hundreds of members of Congress have attended these events to help uplift these wonderful parents and promote their exemplary behavior to inspire others.

As Parents' Day has gained greater public recognition, some of the many other activities to help promote positive parenting in our society have included:

- ◆ Every year since 1995 the President of the United States, over forty State Governors and numerous Mayors have issued proclamations recognizing Parents' Day.
- ◆ Annually, many local schools have held essay contests and awarded prizes to students who have written on the subject of "What it Means to be a Good Parent" and other related topics.
- ◆ Many cities annually sponsor Parents' Day Dinners and picnics to honor local "Parents of the Year."
- ◆ In 2002, The National Youth Court Center, in cooperation with the American Probation and Parole Association, made Parents' Day the focus of its July "Public Awareness and Service Campaign."
- ◆ Parents' Day is officially recognized in the calendars published annually by the National Parent Teacher Association.
- ◆ The NPDC helps promote educational programs and seminars on developing parenting skills and the family's role in building a healthy society.



## Parents' Day, 2003

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

**Children are a daily reminder of the blessings and responsibilities of life and a source of joy, pride, and fulfillment.** Parents, stepparents, adoptive parents, and foster parents have the important responsibility of providing for, protecting, nurturing, teaching, and loving their children. On Parents' Day, we honor America's mothers and fathers and celebrate the values that bind families from one generation to the next and help define us as a Nation.

**As a child's first teachers, parents are the most influential and effective instructors in a child's life.** Through their words, actions, and sacrifices, parents are living examples for children. Young boys and girls watch their parents closely and imitate their behavior. Parents play a critical role in instilling responsibility, integrity, and other life lessons that shape the lives of America's future leaders.

**My Administration is committed to supporting our Nation's families.** We are working with faith-based and community organizations to promote healthy marriages, responsible parenting, and education. And we are committed to fully funding and supporting the Promoting Safe and Stable Families Program, which helps strengthen family bonds, promote adoption, and provide help for vulnerable children across our country.

**Volunteer service is one way parents can spend time with their children while encouraging them to learn the value of helping others.** The USA Freedom Corps' "How I Spent My Summer" initiative includes volunteer opportunities where parents and children can work together to meet the needs of their communities. This initiative offers ideas such as collecting food for local food banks or school supplies for children in need. In addition, families can volunteer at one of our Nation's parks or recreation areas creating trails, assisting with archeological digs, or building and restoring houses. Teaching by example, parents can help their children become responsible citizens.

**Parenting is one of the most rewarding and challenging endeavors in life.** On this special day, we recognize the hard work and compassion of America's parents and celebrate the mothers and fathers who are positive role models for their children. I encourage parents to spend more time reading, talking, and volunteering with their children. I also urge parents to share the joys and wisdom of parenthood with new families in their communities and those planning families for the future.

**NOW, THEREFORE, I, GEORGE W. BUSH,** President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States and consistent with Public Law 103-362, as amended, do hereby proclaim Sunday, July 27, 2003, as Parents' Day. I encourage all Americans to express their respect and appreciation to parents everywhere for their contributions to their children, families, communities, and our Nation. I also call upon citizens to observe this day with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities.

**IN WITNESS WHEREOF,** I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-fifth day of July, in the year of our Lord two thousand three, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-eighth.

**GEORGE W. BUSH**

◆ Thousands of places of worship use Parents' Day as a special Sunday to promote the God-centered family ideal and hold marriage rededications.

◆ This year, in observance of the 10th Anniversary of Parents' Day, special programs and events are planned in communities across the

country and in our nation's capital.

The above are only a sample of the many ways, large and small, that Americans are embracing and celebrating Parents' Day and making it a special day to reflect on the importance of the most important job in life any of us will ever have: being a loving and responsible par-

ent. Please join in helping to make Parents' Day a time of celebration and renewal for our nation's families. Our children are counting on us! ■

*Gary Jarmin is the Government Liaison of the National Parents' Day Council.*

# 2003 National Parents of the Year: Gordon and Bonnie Lange

By Eugene Harnett

**Gordon and Bonnie Lange, from Anchorage, Alaska, were honored as National Parents of the Year for 2003. More than five hundred people came out to celebrate the Langes and other awardees for Excellence in**

Parenting last summer in Anchorage. The following article is based on the program from that Parents' Day celebration.

Gordon and Bonnie Lange have taken in foster children since 1972. They moved to Alaska in 1989, and that year were among the first few couples in the state to

take in children through the Medical Home-Based Care program that started bringing children with serious medical needs out of hospitals and into foster care.

When asked what motivates her, Bonnie Lange replies quietly, "I just love kids." As a foster parent, she wants to give children most in need and most neglected the

same love and quality of home that she gives to her own three biological children. The children she welcomes into her home have intensive health problems. Larry, for whom they now have full guardianship, has cystic fibrosis, cerebral

palsy, and diabetes insidious, among other medical problems. Angela, whom they adopted, had been living in a hospital for five years when they took her into their home in 1990; she lived with them until she passed away in 1996.

Why does Gordon do it? He says he has "a soft spot in his heart for these kids." He feels they need to be respected as any human being should be, that they need to be treated like all people want to be. Gordon and Bonnie realize the depth of love these children with special needs carry around inside themselves. They have received such abundant love from these children, something those who are not around special needs kids might not understand.

Besides the children with medical needs, four of whom they have adopted, the Langes are Emergency Foster Parents, meaning they take in children at all times of the day and night and care for them for up to 30 days. This explains why they have fostered so many children, more than 700, over their 31 years of foster parenting. It is typical for Bonnie to be called at midnight or 4 a.m. to take in a child.

The family goes to church



Gordon and Bonnie Lange with some of their children

together. Gordon is the Senior Commander of the Royal Rangers at their church, an activity group for 5 to 12 year olds. They often shed tears and offer prayers for their children's well-being.

The Langes talk about the Lord to all the children placed in their care. But much louder than their words is the language of their hearts. It speaks to us today in their peaceful smiles and calm demeanors, the results of over 30 years of foster parenting, 15 in

Washington and the rest in Alaska (where they received an award from the Alaska State Division of Family and Youth Services for being foster parents in Alaska for 16 years). Gordon and Bonnie deserve to be honored and lifted up as unselfish models of parental love. ■

Eugene Harnett is the State Coordinator of the American Family Coalition of Alaska and Director of the Alaska Parents Day Council. He and his wife, Yoshiko, have five sons.



## Why Marriage Matters



### About Children

- ◆ Parental divorce reduces the likelihood that children will graduate from college, and achieve high-status jobs.

- ◆ Children who live with their own two married parents enjoy better physical health, on average, than children in other family forms. The health advantages of married homes remain even after taking into account socioeconomic status.

- ◆ Parental divorce approximately doubles the odds that adult children will end up divorced.

### About Men

- ◆ Married men earn between ten and forty percent more than single men with similar education and job histories.

- ◆ Married people, especially married men, have longer life expectancies than otherwise similar singles.

- ◆ Marriage increases the likelihood fathers will have good relationships with children. Sixty-five percent of young adults whose pa-

rents divorced had poor relationships with their fathers (compared to twenty-nine percent from non-divorced families).

### About Women

- ◆ Divorce and unmarried childbearing significantly increases poverty rates of both mothers and children. Between one-fifth and one-third of divorcing women end up in poverty as a result of divorce.

- ◆ Married mothers have lower rates of depression than single or cohabiting mothers.

- ◆ Married women appear to have a lower risk of domestic violence than cohabiting or dating women. Even after controlling for race, age, and education, people who live together are still three times more likely to report violent arguments than married people.

### About Society

- ◆ Adults who live together but do not marry—cohabitators—are more similar to singles than to married couples in terms of physical health and disability, emotional well-being and mental health, as well as assets and earnings.

Their children more closely resemble the children of single people than the children of married people.

- ◆ Marriage appears to reduce the risk that children and adults will be either perpetrators or victims of crime. Single and divorced women are four to five times more likely to be victims of violent crime in any given year than married women. Boys raised in single-parent homes are about twice as likely (and boys raised in stepfamilies three times as likely) to have committed a crime that leads to incarceration by the time they reach their early thirties, even after controlling for factors such as race, mother's education, neighborhood quality and cognitive ability.

This material was excerpted from the report, "Why Marriage Matters: Twenty One Conclusions from the Social Sciences," published by the Institute for American Values (New York, NY). Used by permission. For more information, contact the Institute for American Values at [www.americanvalues.org](http://www.americanvalues.org)



### A SPECIAL PROJECT OF THE AMERICAN FAMILY COALITION

The American Family Coalition is a national grass-roots leadership organization building alliances in all 50 states with community and faith-based organizations and policymakers. Our mission is to renew families and communities through education based on God's ideal of the family, model public policies, and faith-based action embodying the principle of living for the sake of others.

**James P. Flynn,**  
Project Director  
**Howard Self,**  
Parents' Day Project Director  
**Joseph Wakaria,**  
Financial Officer  
**Bento Leal,**  
Ad Sales Manager

**Anthony Flores,**  
Content Coordinator  
**Dr. David Burgess,**  
Content Coordinator/Editor  
**Holly Haft,**  
Designer

COVER PHOTOS: (TOP) CHAD EHLERS / INDEX STOCK, (BOTTOM L TO R) ED LALLO / INDEX STOCK, JEFFREY MYERS / INDEX STOCK,

# Emphatic Parenting—An Essay

By Rob Vaughn

***I was 23 when the kids started coming. I wasn't ready. The comforting thing is, nobody's ready. God gives us children and we are converted into parents. It's like skydiving: jump, and there you go. No turning back. At least in parenting, unlike skydiving, there's a bit of room to mess up. There's margin for error. (God tosses in some mercy***

along with the duty.)

Maybe the better analogy is elephant riding. When I was a radio news reporter years ago, I was asked to ride a Ringling Brothers circus elephant in a promotional parade and to go on the air from atop the thing. The beast was huge, rough and stinky; I was scared, unstable and ridiculous. That's parenting. The job is huge, rough, stinky (especially in those early years); it induces fear, instability and a sense of ridiculousness ("what makes me qualified to do this?"). You're up there, astride the beast, wondering if you'll fall off and be trampled. Sometimes you feel like jumping off. Other times you can't quite believe this is happening and it's unspeakably wonderful.

Boy, could I get mileage out of the parenting-circus analogy: death defying leaps without a net, frenzied juggling, cleanup of manure, etc., etc. But I won't. Better to proceed to my possibly earthshaking thesis: parenting isn't for wimps. Or: A happy home requires emphatic parenting. Not perfect parenting, merely emphatic, courageous parenting.

When, for some reason, Angela and I were chosen as Pennsylvania's Parents of the Year in 2003, we broke the news to our children. Our youngest, Stephanie (then 18), shrieked with laughter. I laughed with her. (Although, after a few seconds, I wondered why she was laughing quite that hard.) We were honored, of course, and surprised and curious. "What does anyone know about us?" seemed to be what the five of us were thinking. And I was thinking: "What if they ask me to expound on what makes a good parent?"

They didn't ask. (I got over it. At least I got to meet the governor.) But as I reflected on 20-plus years of raising children, I realized a few things: The children survived their youth. We survived their youth. They are happy. They love to come home. They like to bring friends to our house. The dinner table is fun. We laugh and sing. We argue. We celebrate ice cream and the Phillies. We talk about issues, books, and theology.

These are precious things. I don't take them for granted.

"Before I was married," said John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, "I had three theories about raising children. Now I have three children and no theories." That's about the size of it. Experts have their theories, but I'd rather to talk to someone who's been through it with some modicum of success. That is, their children are people you'd be happy to know.

I've come to think that parents need to be emphatic, bold and a bit fearless (if you can have fearlessness in bits). Skydiving comes to mind again. You go take the plunge. The challenge, I think, is that we live in a culture where a good many other parents tend toward timidity and uncertainty. They are conspicuously conviction-free. They take a languid, laissez faire approach to parenting: easy on the rules, buddies with their kids rather than parents, spectacularly open-minded. (And then they're shocked when the kids go off in disturbing directions.)

I'm not calling for excessive certainty, rigidity, or power playing. It's just that the culture will sweep unanchored, unguided kids away. Sometimes that happens even in households where parents are trying hard to mold upright young people. But woe to the parents who don't even try. They'll keep fastidious guard over their investments and their lawns, but over their kids? "They'll be OK." You know, having rules and consequences – it's all so old-fashioned and, really, primitive.

That is to say, you may take a stand on conviction and find – surprise – that other parents aren't on the same page. In fact, they're not on the same book. A fact not lost on your children.

Quick example: the co-ed sleepover. My teenaged son insisted he be allowed to go. Everyone else was going. "Their parents seem to think it's OK. Why do you have to be so stuck up?" Dilemma: do we stick to our guns (that we think this is one powder-keg of a stupid idea) or do we cave, because we prefer to have our kids (and their friends) think of us as cool? Hmm. Do I go with the hard choice or the easy? What will I be – courageous or wimpy?

Endure the gauntlet. Pray a brief "God, help me" and stand your ground. The kid goes to bed mad. But you – and he – wake up feeling that somehow something noble, and ennobling, has transpired. (Well, this feeling may overtake him somewhat slowly.) Years later, he may thank you. And he'll be courageous with his own son.

Here are some other non-expert ideas, free of charge. A bit on the counter-cultural side, but that's me.

✓ **Indoctrinate them.** It's not a bad word. The word means to "instruct in a body of doctrine or principles." It's not only a good thing; it's your duty. It's what parenting boils down to. Teach them what you think is right and true. Or someone else will. Oppose the pseudo-sophisticated "open-mindedness" that says they should find their own truth. If you don't think your principles are right and therefore needed by your kids, why do you hold to them? A creeping, corrosive relativism puts a whole generation in jeopardy – unless bold parents teach their children. The ancient Hebrews had it right: "Impress [these commands] on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road...." (Deuteronomy 6:7).

✓ **Lecture them.** Not always, just now and then. If Dad is a man of convictions, he ought to be able to deliver extemporaneous lectures on a variety of subjects dear to him, in three minutes or thirty, as needed. (My kids know my "money is fungible" lecture on family finances by heart; they could also repeat my discourses on God, systematic theology, and Carolina barbecue.)

✓ **Cajole them.** In a good way. That is, urge, entreat, nudge, admonish. You're the coach. Egg them on to excel. Equip them to articulate what they believe and why.

✓ **Dispense justice.** Kids sometimes need to be punished. It's good for their souls. It's a moral universe. If we meet wrongdoing with soft or silly consequences, we compromise the child's moral growth. We fail her.

✓ **Dispense mercy.** They need this, too, in heaping helpings. Temper justice with mercy. Empathize. Admit when you're wrong. Love extravagantly.

✓ **Be there.** Show up at their activities. I have a friend whose Dad didn't. She was forever wounded. Don't show up and the kid knows you don't care.

✓ **Find a "signature activity."** That is, a special thing that your whole family does together, and does it so zealously and so well that you're practically known for it. We sing. We became a five-voice, a cappella singing group. We've done many concerts. I can't tell you the wonders of this experience for "bonding" and camaraderie and love. For your clan, it may be skiing the Alps, snorkeling, or coin collecting. But do it. Allow some special activity to take hold, then nurture it, and make it your thing. Your family's "signature activity." The benefits are terrific and per-

manent. When that esteemed professor of parenting, Jerry Seinfeld, said, "There is no such thing as fun for the whole family," he couldn't have been more wrong.

Parenting is hard. It takes nerve and sustained commitment, convictions and courage. It's critical that we be bold, emphatic parents. Stand strong. Indoctrinate, lecture and cajole. Discipline. And love mightily. You don't get any "do-overs" – you take 'em to adulthood and it's done. Pray and go at it.

Then, enjoy the deep pleasures of gathering your grown-up kids at your own table again, with ice cream and laughing and singing. ■

Rob Vaughn is a father of three and news anchor at WFMZ-TV in Allentown, PA. (Robert and Angel Vaughn were chosen Pennsylvania Parents of the Year—2003).



## Florida Senate Resolution #1800 By Senator Larcenia Bullard

*A resolution recognizing and celebrating Parents' Day in Florida; adopted by Florida Senate April 21, 2004*

**WHEREAS**, in 1994, the Congress of the United States proclaimed that the fourth Sunday in July of every year is to be celebrated as "Parents' Day," and

**WHEREAS**, the family unit is the most fundamental of all organizational elements of civilized society, and is the primary source of the behavioral influences that develop ethical character, moral values, and the capacity of children to accept and responsibly perform their duties to others and themselves, and

**WHEREAS**, parents are best positioned to influence the growth and development of their children from the moment of their birth through their adolescent years to know right from wrong; to have the values necessary to be impelled to choose right instead of wrong; to be selfless enough to be aware of and have compassionate concern for other people; to always try to make their best efforts to accomplish the things they undertake to do without attempting to diminish anyone else; to readily and honestly acknowledge their mistakes with genuine humility; and to continually try to fully develop their God-given talents, completely realize their potential capabilities, and become all they can and should be for others and themselves, and

**WHEREAS**, the observance of Parents' Day is intended to serve as a reminder of the indispensable importance of successful marriages, wholesome lifestyles, and responsible parenting to ensure sound development of the young people who will be leading the world into the future, NOW, THEREFORE,

### **Be It Resolved by the Senate of the State of Florida:**

That the Florida Senate recognizes the fourth Sunday in July of every year as "Parents' Day" in Florida, and encourages all parents to commit themselves to responsible and nurturing parenting to ensure sound development of their children and a healthier society.

# Mom, You Are the Beautifullest Lady . . .

By Kim Korman Brown

**A few of the many aspects of the animal kingdom that I find endearing are the grooming habits of certain species. Consider the quiet moment under a leafy tree as a family of gorillas comb and preen one another in**

relaxed quietude. Imagine them yawning, peeling bananas for each other and plucking (and eating) an occasional bug from a loved one's ear.

Some of the perks of human family life are akin to that. There are times when we like to groom, preen and calm each other. (Most of us would probably forego the bug plucking.) We seek each other out in a lonely moment and exchange a touch, a hug, a backrub. Recently I was sitting on the couch watching a movie, holding the baby on my lap. Ranin (who was 4 at the time) walked up with his big plastic bat and started rubbing my face with it. "Let me massage your head with my baseball bat," he said to me lovingly. (I swear that is a verbatim quote.) "Do you have a fever?"

Then he sat next to me and said, "Mom, you are totally beautiful, your face is totally pretty. You are

the beautifullest lady and I want to buy you a queen suit, an' a princess suit. When I'm a teenager I want to buy you a million dollars. When am I a teenager? Now you tell me I'm handsome. Will you buy me a police suit an' a prince suit?"

I have to say here that in my entire life nobody has ever gushed to me about my beauty except my mother. (The phrases "a face only a mother could love" and "love is blind" come to mind—still, it's sweet to hear it.) Kind of a preening of the soul, if you will. Then Ranin attempted to climb onto my lap, pulling my hair accidentally and pinching various body parts with his knees. He drew his grubby little face close and kissed me, climbed down and went back to playing. Sometimes a boy's gotta do what a boy's gotta do. That was our moment under the proverbial tree.

My daughter Gracie has a differ-



ent approach to the same end. When she feels affectionate, she crawls into my lap and says, "I didn't get enough love today." She is very direct about it. "Mommy, scratch my back. Now scratch my neck. Now scratch my arms. Don't stop. Can you keep doing it? That feels good. Can you keep doing it? Don't stop." She lounges on me like I'm the latest in Lazy-Mom recliners. "Now do that thing where you run your fingers through my hair. Yes, like that. Keep doing that. That feels

so good. Don't stop Mommy, keep doing that. Can you keep doing that for an hour?"

When children want to reciprocate love, there is nothing so tender. If my husband has an especially bad headache in the morning, the whole family massages him. Even the baby sticks his hand in and mashes it around. Our eldest boy, Tymon, has learned some really good techniques over the years. He's somewhat of a massage therapist's apprentice. We keep telling him

that he'll be so grateful when he grows up, because we're helping him master a skill.

As we work on Daddy, sometimes everybody starts massaging everybody else until it turns into a big, fat tickle/wrestle session. This usually ceases abruptly when the baby gets kicked in the face, cries and wipes his liberally running nose on my shoulder. Ahh, the intimacy of family life.

It really is the little things that make memories. So, if you ever feel distant from your loved ones, reach over and comb somebody's hair with your fingers. The next thing you know they might peel you a banana. ■

*Kim Brown is happily married to Peter Brown and they have four great kids, two dogs and a cat and live on the edge of a cornfield in the middle of nowhere. She writes family humor columns, music reviews and dreams to someday ride on the back of an elephant. You can contact Kim at [kimbrown@worldcommunity.com](mailto:kimbrown@worldcommunity.com) or at her website [worldcommunity.com](http://worldcommunity.com).*



## Marrige Education Helps Low-Income Couples

**Healthy marriage education helps economically disadvantaged couples in numerous ways. "We saw what it did for us and we want other couples to experience the same benefits," said Ramon and Theresa Montoya,**

whose experience with marriage education is an inspiration to everyone they meet.

Nearly three years ago, the Montoyas attended a marriage conference conducted by NAME, the National Association of Marriage Enhancement in Phoenix, Arizona. At the time the Montoyas were living together, without marriage, and had been separated seven times during the five years that they cohabitated.

At the end of the marriage education event, they were so moved by what they learned that they decided to marry the very next day.

"We knew we needed a lot more marriage education, but we wanted to immediately make things right," said Ramon.

"We were tired of living in misery, and right away, we were able to communicate and be at peace,

because we did the right thing. We learned that marriage is more than just commitment, it is covenant," said Teresa.

But the Montoyas didn't stop there. They went on to receive training to help other couples, and became certified marriage specialists (CMS). Today, they teach a weekly marriage education class in Spanish.

"Hispanic couples have nowhere to turn to when they are in crisis, or even just to learn about the benefits of marriage. There's a tremendous need for marriage education in the Hispanic community, and what we've learned from NAME is now helping numerous Spanish-speaking couples," said Ramon.

In fact, the Montoyas now have five more couples that have registered to be trained to become certified marriage specialists to help



Ramon and Theresa Montoya

other Spanish-speaking couples. In addition, the Montoya's are renovating a forty-foot trailer to become a mobile marriage skills Education Center to help low-income Spanish-speaking couples in inner-city Phoenix and the surrounding areas.

The Hispanic "marriage mobile" is patterned after the marriage mobile pioneered by NAME to reach out in low income communities, where marriage education

and skills training are not readily available.

Although the Montoyas are now reaching out to numerous other couples, they feel the greatest benefit of their marriage education experience is evidenced in their own home.

"Before we got married our children would use us to get to each other," Theresa explained. "But when they knew we were united and standing together, it was different. We had control of the house again, instead of the house being out-of-control."

"We've also seen a remarkable difference in our financial picture," said Ramon. "No longer did we waste money on selfishness, and that was primarily my selfishness, but now we had a vision for the future of our family that helped us make better decisions. Developing a healthy marriage helps the whole family in many different areas."

"The Montoyas are a beautiful example of what can happen when a couple learns marriage skills that they were never exposed to before,"

said Dr. Leo Godzich, Executive Director of NAME.

With the rapid rate of expansion of the Hispanic population in America, Dr. Godzich contends that marriage skills education is vital for the health of the next-generation of Spanish-speaking Americans.

"Economically disadvantaged, Spanish-speaking families are growing at an exponential rate, and unless we provide examples like the Montoyas and the marriage education skills training needed for those families, we will reap the negative socioeconomic consequences as a society for decades to come," said Dr. Godzich.

Godzich hopes to garner federal support to establish a Hispanic arm of NAME to help the growing population of Spanish-speaking couples that need to learn the benefits of marriage. Part of welfare reform called for the increase in two-parent families and an understanding of the benefits of healthy marriages as an attempt to reduce

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# Responsible Fatherhood, Faith, Marriage and Family

By Dr. Charles A. Ballard

**On that blessed day, that very first "Parents' Day," God spoke and said: "Let us make man in our own image, after our likeness and let them have rulership over everything that will be and God made man and woman."**

Wow, what a beautiful sight that must have been—two human beings, the beginning of a new planet, a new world. Then God blessed them and spoke to them saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth, have many children, fill the earth and master it." God loves family. When he spoke and said, "Let Us," He was speaking to other members of His God Family.

Adam and Eve were to fill the earth with other human beings who would look and act like them, for they were to be made in His image, after His likeness. Adam was to cleave to his wife Eve, and Eve was to cling to her husband, Adam. They were one. He was assigned to her as secret service agents are assigned to protect the President of the United States. God designed Adam to be a covering for his wife, and a protector for his children. More than this, Adam was to be the Servant leader, the Servant head, and Servant priest. Adam was to keep Eve at all times by his side. God gave them five wonderful gifts: a home, food, employment, a day of rest, and a family. How much better could it get? Then it happened: first to Eve, then to Adam. An outsider usurped the power of dominion entrusted to them. This outsider, Satan, decided to put asunder what God had joined together. This outsider was allowed to come between the man and his wife. Sin entered the world. Then a tide of woe fell upon God's wonderful creation.

Adam was to be the husband, a companion to his wife and his children. He was to rule with love,

affection, and live a life of integrity. But now all that was over. Adam ate the fruit after Eve ate it and then blamed Eve! Can you imagine how she must have felt? Standing there before God with Adam, her husband, pointing a finger toward her? And can you imagine what she must have been thinking, standing there pregnant? Can you imagine Cain, the first son coming into the world looking for someone to hit? The first real chance he got he took it out on his brother, Abel.

Adam's very first son was a murderer. Adam disobeyed his father, God, and Adam's first son, Cain, disobeyed him and killed his own brother. So, throughout history, man resorted to violence and murder as the way out. In some communities, homicide is the number one killer of young men ages eighteen to thirty. Brother against brother, family against family, city against city, nation against nation. This began with the first family; it will take family to correct it.

It has been said that a family is a group of individuals with the common goal of group survival and advancement. Everything comes from family. Where there is no family there is no society or culture. The well-being of the community, the prosperity of the nation depends on the directors of the family. The home must be the place where children, mothers and fathers feel safe. Our home must become "little heavens"—a place where the hearts of children are cultivated through love, compassion, empathy and true courtesy. The father and mother realize this by exhibiting respect for one

another, cultivating love and trust.

Today many children are left to raise themselves (latch-key kids), as the mother and father go off to work. And even in those homes where there are stay-at-home moms, there are challenges. In fact, often families attending church are struggling to keep themselves afloat. Among churchgoers, divorce and family breakup rivals that of non-churchgoers. So what are we to do? We must first understand the problem, before we can find a solution.

Several profound statements opened my eyes to the problem, triggering my search for the solution. The first is Exodus 20:5. God says he will visit "...the iniquity of the father upon the children to the third and fourth generation of them that hate me." The second is found in Ezekiel 18:2: "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge." The last two statements are from the New Testament. Ephesians 6:4 states, "You fathers provoke not your sons and daughters to anger. Bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Colossians 3:21 says, "Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged." These four very profound statements point to the core of not only America's problem, but, the world's problem. Many fathers across the world are provoking their children by abandoning them, abusing them and neglecting them.

Although America and other developed countries spend billions of dollars each year fighting drug and alcohol abuse, crime, poverty, health disparities, educational failure, and out-of-wedlock births, these are only symptoms of still a greater problem—fatherlessness. "Fatherlessness" is not the same as "fatherless," for there are many homes where the father is at home and married and yet child abuse, spousal abuse, unfaithfulness, incest and dishonor prevail. Contrary to

conventional wisdom, some single parent homes are fairing quite well and producing good, respectful citizens. But these are the exceptions, not the rule. Last night over 25 million boys and girls went to bed in a home without a father present. "Fatherlessness" is a condition of violence, neglect, abandonment, woundedness and pain that is created in the absence of a loving, compassionate, secure, respectful, responsible and nurturing father. The goal is not just a father in the home, but a loving father in the home with a loving wife (not girlfriend), to support him in raising their children.

I have worked with men seeking custody of their children who speak lovingly to and about their children but speak disparagingly of the children's mother. Men have to be taught that the very best way to love their children is to show respect, honor and love to their children's mother. Men must learn that the road to the hearts of their sons and daughters is through the mother of their children. As Adam should have done in the beginning, men must cleave to their wives. They must become the covering for the children's mother. Men must begin by surrendering their hearts, mind and hands to all that is true, pure, just, honest and lovely. Second, they must become aware of their own need for family. When I fly across the country, the stewardess announces, "If there is a need for oxygen, the air mask will drop down. First secure your own mask, then if there is a child or an older handicapped person, secure theirs. First secure yourself, then help others."

Men—husbands and fathers—must first anchor themselves. Then they are secure enough to help others. Second they must forgive themselves for past mistakes and start again. Third, they must

take responsibility for all their actions without blaming others. Fourth, they must love themselves, so they can love others. Fifth, they must take care of themselves, then they can take care of their families. Sixth, they must respect themselves before they can respect others. Seventh, they must have personal discipline and self-control. Lastly, they must have a great sense of self-worth. In this way they will value others. Men must understand that in order to stop the killing, the wars, the crime and related problems, they must build family; a well-ordered, well-disciplined family. With the support of their children's mothers, men must teach the children that they must be boys and girls first, then men and women, then husbands and wives, and then fathers and mothers, in that order. In order to create a better world for all to live in we must make family. As mentioned above, in Exodus 20:5 God says he will visit "...the iniquity of the father upon the children to the third and fourth generation of them that hate me." However, in the second part of that verse He says that he will show "...mercy unto a thousand generations of them that love me and keep my commandments". On this Parents' Day, it is my prayer and hope that fathers and mothers around the world can embrace the image and likeness of their first Parents, our Creators and Makers; The God Family. Wow, then what a world of families that would be! ■

*Dr. Charles Augustus Ballard is Founder and Chief Executive Officer of The Institute of Responsible Fatherhood and Family Revitalization headquarters in Washington, D.C. Charles Ballard and his wife, Frances, reside in Maryland.*



# Preventing Violence—Why Families Are Important

By Richard Panzer

**Family breakdown is the major contributing factor in a host of the social problems that confront youth today. In this excerpt from Richard Panzer's article on preventing violence, he argues eloquently for the unique**



contributions that both fathers and mothers make in shaping the character of young people and the vital role of parents in preventing youth violence

## On the contribution that fathers make to their sons:

...According to Rolf Loeber, Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine, "a close and intense relationship between a boy and his father prevents hostility and inappropriate aggressiveness." A boy abandoned by his father is deprived of a deep sense of personal security. That that can lead to aggressive and hostile behavior which can be a barrier to being accepted by other children and later to rejection by the larger community.

When his police chief reported rising rates of youth violence, drug use, and gangs, Mayor Bill Hardiman of Kitwood, Michigan decided to speak directly with gang members in his community. He asked them, "Is there a father in your home?" Two said they hadn't seen their father in years. A girl gang member said with tears in her eyes, "I've never seen my father."

The gang members explained that they joined because of a need for security and fellowship. They even call it "family." He asked, "What can we do to help you?" The girl gang member answered, "Clone Cisco [the Youth Director]! He's always there for us, always tries to help us, tells us what not to do, about right and wrong!" In other words, he does what a father would normally do.

Classic studies on the causes of delinquency by Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck of Harvard University in the 1950s found that in a well-functioning family, the very presence of the father embodies authority, an authority conveyed through his daily involvement in family life. The benefits a child receives from his relationship with his father are notably different from those received from his relationship with his mother. These benefits of paternal authority and discipline, as well as affection and

attachment, are absent in the life of a child living without his or her father.

The involved fathers of the Glueck study who were active in raising their sons reaped personal benefits as well: greater marital stability, greater happiness in middle age and better promotions at the workplace. Fathers who give their sons even a small portion of the caring, time, and love they may have longed for from their own dads—but often did not receive—got a great personal emotional boost. They were giving a legacy of male love to the next generation of boys, and repairing something from their own childhood simultaneously.

The effects of father absence are vividly shown in a study of Juvenile Incarceration ratios in Wisconsin and their correlation with family structure. Among children who never lived with both parents, the rate of incarceration is 22 times greater than among children who live with two parents. For children living with a single, divorced parent, the rate is 12 times higher.

## On the unique role of the mother

...Early attachment to his mother leads to empathy and sensitivity to the suffering of others. In her classic study of the relation between maternal responsiveness in the first three years of life and the child's compliance at twelve months, psychologist Eleanor Maccoby found that rather than producing "spoiled brats," responsive mothers were rewarded with obedient children. In fact, Maccoby found that the more responsive mothers were in the first three months of life—for example, going immediately to pick up the baby when he or she cried—the more obedient the child was at one year.

A single mother lacks the support usually given by a present father, especially during the period surrounding birth and in early childhood years when children make heavy demands on her. The lack of support and added emotional and physical stress often results in fatigue and decreased parental availability to the child,

increasing the risk of an emotionally distant relationship with the child, which can reduce the child's lifelong capacity for emotional attachment and empathy for others.

Many violent boys love their mothers but do not feel that these women can protect them. Indeed, they often have direct physical evidence to the contrary. And usually there is no one else in their lives who can demonstrate to them the protection that a powerful parent figure can provide. This void makes them ripe for the negative influences of the street and the dark side of adolescent culture.

The mother and the father both have unique roles to play. Children do best when both their father and mother are there to support each other in parenting burdens and challenges.

## On discipline

...A parent who cares about a child will watch his behavior, see him doing things he shouldn't be

doing, and correct and sometimes punish wrong behavior. But doing this requires skills, skills often missing if the parents never received good supervision when they were growing up. Professor Kevin Wright summarizes parental skills in this way:

- Notice what the child is doing...over long periods of time
- Model social skills of respect, etc.
- Clearly state house rules
- Consistently provide some punishments for transgressions
- Reinforce positive behavior of child
- Negotiate disagreements so the conflicts do not escalate

Monitoring children involves awareness of their companions, whereabouts, and free-time activities. Many studies show that good supervision is just as important as having a strong emotional attachment to the child. Parents' supervision fills the child's need for attention, moral education, and correction. Love without discipline

isn't enough. The idea that enhanced "self-esteem" by itself is a protective factor against destructive behavior is a popular, but unfounded, myth.

While parental supervision is obviously very important and good for children, harsh or excessive discipline has just the opposite effect. The parents of delinquents are harsher than ordinary parents in punishing their children and depressed, stressed, or hostile parents are more likely to vent their anger on their more aggressive children.■

Richard A. Panzer is a character educator. His work with young people in the area of preventing violence led to publication of an article "Preventing Violence: Why families are important, what they can do," by Richard A. Panzer, (2001), Center for Educational Media, Westwood, N.J.



Dr. Wade Horn, Assistant Secretary for the Administration of Children and Families at the department of Health and Human Services, joins Dr. Leo Godzich at the launch of NAME's "Marriage Mobile" concept, a mobile marriage skills education center.

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the potentially increasing numbers of people on welfare rolls.

The Montoyas will help head up the Spanish-speaking division of NAME, said Godzich. "The huge influx of Spanish-speaking population needs our attention as it relates to the formation of healthy families, and we intend to do our part to help their assimilation into society as productive members," Godzich said.

"Of course, we felt inadequate when we first began to help other couples," Theresa reflected. "We thought, how can we be helping

other couples if our situation was not normal?"

"Then we realized," Ramon added, "that we don't have to be perfect, just available. After all, marriage counselors and educators are not perfect, just equipped. NAME trained us and helped us realize that other couples will benefit from marriage skills education even if we ourselves are not perfect."

The Montoyas are excited about networking with Spanish-speaking marriage educators from other countries at the Ninth Annual International Marriage Conference this fall ([\[www.marriageconferences.com\]\(http://www.marriageconferences.com\)\). More than 4000 are expected at the 3-day conference in Phoenix, September 30 through October 2.](http://www.marriageconfer-</a></p>
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"We have seen firsthand that as we help other couples, it strengthens our marriage, and we want a multitude of Spanish-speaking couples to experience the same joy and benefits," said Teresa.

Godzich claims that the benefits couples receive from a healthy marriage spill over into the rest of society, and in the case of the Montoyas, the evidence of generational and multiplicative benefits are clear.■