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## **Celebration and Education Seminar for Marriages and Families**

**Indianapolis, Indiana, March 6, 2017** – Even though marriage and family are two of the oldest human institutions, even a cursory review of statistics related to marriages and families will reveal that Americans have not been very successful with either over the past several decades compared to earlier generations. While data released last year by the National Center for Family and Marriage Research, reported in a November 2016 *New York Times* article, revealed a 0.2% rise in marriages nationally in 2015, along with a 0.7% drop in the divorce rate to 16.9%, the lowest since 1977, the article stated that prior to that year, “Marriage rates had been declining for years in part because younger generations have waited longer to get married. But researchers have found that typical marriages still have about a 50% chance of lasting.”

There is some disagreement among researchers concerning the 50% divorce rate. According to Divorce.com, however, “What most of the experts do agree on is that while the 50% divorce rate is only an estimated projection right now, unless present trends change abruptly, the number will be very close to being accurate by the end of this decade.” And, the website claims that, since 1970, marriages have declined 30%, while divorces have increased 40%. “And even if divorce rates decline in the future,” a Bloomberg.com article from June 2016 postulates, “it doesn't mean Americans' relationships and families are more stable. While fewer people marry, they're still coupling up and living together. And these marriage-less couplings are far less likely to last than marriages are.” The *Washington Post*, also in June, 2016, quoted Eric Klinenberg, sociologist and co-author of Aziz Ansari's *Modern Romance: An Investigation*: “People don't see marriage as necessary for a good life,” he says. “There used to be one clear path to happiness, with strong moral expectations and having children. Now there are all kinds of legitimate choices.”

The State of Indiana has not collected nor reported divorce statistics since 1980, although some counties do. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC), which publishes vital statistics for states and U.S. Territories, reported a 3.3% divorce rate for Indiana in 2011. And in 2015, *WLS-TV ABC7 News* in Chicago reported, “Indiana had the tenth highest percentage of divorced people,” nationally, “at 12.7 percent.” Sadly, regardless of statistics, the truth is every divorce represents a broken family, and has an effect on every member of the family. Broken and/or dysfunctional families create far-reaching and negative impacts in our communities and society in general.

An Indianapolis-based not-for-profit, the Indiana Healthy Marriage and Family Coalition (IHMFC), with affiliated organizations in other parts of the state, has been helping to improve those statistics, enrich marital relationships, and strengthen families by offering free training to couples and families with children. The IHMFC has been teaching such classes as *8 Habits of Highly Successful Marriages*, *How to Make*

*Your Good Thing Better, African-American Parenting Classes, and the Family Strengthening* curriculum at no charge to participants, some since 2007.

Annually, the IHMFC and its affiliates lead Indiana communities participating in World Marriage Day, and in Black Marriage Day (BMD) celebrations. The latter is a national celebration begun in 2001 by Nisa Muhammad, founder of the Wedded Bliss Foundation (WBF), “a community-based organization helping teens, singles and couples develop healthy relationships and healthy marriages to improve their lives, better the outcomes for children and create stronger communities,” according to its website, [www.weddedblissinc.com](http://www.weddedblissinc.com)

To observe BMD this year, the IHMFC is inviting Indianapolis singles, couples, and families to a free seminar designed to educate as well as celebrate. The theme is: “Making Love Last – Celebration and Education.” The seminar will be held inside the Interchurch Center on the corner of 42<sup>nd</sup> Street and Michigan Road, from 10 a.m. until 2:30 p.m., with a light lunch provided free to the first 100 attendees. Those wishing to attend should register on the coalition website, [www.ihmfc.org](http://www.ihmfc.org) by Tuesday, March 21.

The seminar will feature presentations by four subject matter experts: Dr. Linda Bell, Ph.D., Licensed Family Therapist, author, and Professor of Sociology at IUPUI; Dr. Lorraine Blackman, Ph.D., author, and retired professor from IU’s School of Social Work; Dr. Alexander Seawood, D. Min., founder of Family and Community Partners, Inc.; and Pamala Grant-Taylor, who has a family law practice in Indianapolis.

There also will be a facilitated open-panel discussion during which couples who’ve been married for varying lengths of time will share their experiences. Attendees may interact with these couples by asking questions to find out what it takes to have a successful marriage, to understand how to overcome challenges most marriages experience, and how to raise healthy and socially-balanced children.

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