

News Release



St. Mark A.M.E. Church

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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St. Mark Announces Summer Lens on Healthy Relationships Initiative

Improving Communities One Healthy Relationship at a Time Through Non-profit Partnership

(Milwaukee, WI) August 3, 2009—St. Mark A.M.E. Church, a long-established beacon of light in the African-American community, will launch its Summer Lens on Healthy Relationships initiative in partnership with the Center for Self-Sufficiency and its VOW to Succeed program. The initiative will focus on providing keys to relationship success during a **free** two-day workshop for singles and another for married couples. Workshops will take place at the church, 1616 W. Atkinson Avenue, on August 22nd and 29th and are open to the public – 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. for married couples and 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. for singles.

In light of the alarming rate of domestic violence in Milwaukee and a recent Wisconsin Department of Health report of fewer marriages and increased divorces in 2008 that left close to 16,500 children in single-parent households, St. Mark has chosen to thwart these trends by educating the community on tools and techniques that produce sustainable unions. “The fact is marriage has always been the backbone of strong families in the African-American community. In yesteryears, the premise of marriage was an accepted norm. It was as familiar as bread and water at the dinner table,” says Reverend Darryl Williams, pastor of St. Mark A.M.E. Church. “Today, as a community, we have to work harder to communicate the importance of healthy marriage which stems from a productive relationship.”

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VOW to Succeed Program Director, Jeanette Stevens, acknowledges, "The Center for Self-Sufficiency is honored to offer marriage enhancement and relationship skill-building education in partnership with an historic community staple like St. Mark. Together we're hoping to inspire a community-wide interest to increase two-parent households, prevent domestic violence, and model long-lasting marriages in a healthy environment."

Workshops are entirely free; however, early registration is encouraged due to limited seating. Singles and married couples can register online by visiting www.vowtosucceed.org and clicking on the "Classes" link or calling St. Mark A.M.E. Church at 414.562.8030.

About St. Mark A.M.E. Church

St. Mark AME Church was the first African American church established in Milwaukee by Ezekial Gillespie in 1869. Today, with a congregation of 1600 members, the church supports the community with worship and fellowship gatherings, a library, credit union and dining hall.

About the Center for Self-Sufficiency

Founded in 1997, the Center for Self-Sufficiency (CFSS) upholds the importance of healthy marriages, relationships and character education by participating in federal initiatives that help youth and adults develop productive life skills, attitude and behaviors. Through the **VOW to Succeed** program, CFSS partners with community and faith-based organizations to provide classes to youth, singles, unmarried expecting mothers and fathers, and married couples in the areas of relationship-building, marriage preparation and marriage enhancement.

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