February 2017



Marriage Management Newsletter



Bob & Barbara Zielinski, Executive Directors MARRIAGE MANAGEMENT'S MISSION IS TO KEEP VETERANS'
MARRIAGES FROM BECOMING A HIDDEN CASUALTY OF WAR!

CURRENT ACTIVITY

MMC is operating under two grants: **Texas Veterans Commission (TVC) Fund for Veterans Assistance** and **United Way Tarrant County (UWTC) Veterans Fund.** Both run from 1 July, 2016 to 30 June, 2017.

TVC allows for 20-25 programs statewide, depending on attendance, to serve 280 persons (Military or Veteran, spouse, children). To date we have served 281 people and taught 13 classes. This means we have met our goal in 7 months!

Since we have not yet expended all funds, we arranged a Spring schedule to continue serving. We are trying reach underserved areas of the State.

REVISED Programs scheduled under the Fund for Veterans' Assistance:

March 23 - Fort Hood

April 19 – Fort Hood

April 22 – UT School of Social Work, Austin

April 29 - Cohen Clinic, San Antonio

May 3 - Fort Hood

June 10 - Cohen Clinic, Addison

UWTC allows for 10 local programs to serve 100 persons. We receive 1/12 of the grant amount monthly and report to United Way each quarter. With the UWTC Grant, we have taught 5 classes and served 88 Veterans and spouses; 88% of goal with 5 months left!

Programs scheduled under the United Way Tarrant County Veterans Fund:

Mar 18 – NAS-JRB, Ft. Worth Apr? - UTA, Arlington

SUPPORT

Our partners have been helping us stretch our budget by providing free space, providing lunches and snacks and providing childcare. This allows us to offer additional classes with the funds we have.

We traveled to Austin January 31 to testify before the TVC Fund for Veterans' Assistance committee to request a renewal of our grant for 2017-2018 with a 33% increase in funding. Awards will be announced in May.

February 6th, we returned to Austin for an all-day Texas Veterans Commission Summit. It was a place to be seen and conduct state-wide networking. We talked with an aide of the Lt. Governor, the head of Catholic Charities for Houston and were interviewed for i-Heart Radio. We sat in on several informative panel discussions including Mental Health, Homelessness in Women Veterans and How to Reach Post-9/11 Veterans.

We did not receive the grant from Elizabeth Dole's Hidden Heroes Fund. We did not apply to the Meadows Foundation since they funneled all their Veterans' funding to Texas HHS whose application deadline has already passed.

We received generous donations from Bob and Barbara Lovelace of Winning Solutions, Virginia; and from Charlie and Lyn Wright of Jack o' Diamonds Lincoln/Honda of Tyler Texas. These funds have enabled us to begin building Marriage Management to meet the needs of this growing mission.

NEW STAFF

Dr. John Van Epp, author of the Couple Links-Military curriculum we use, came to our office on Jan 19 to conduct training for us and our three new facilitator couples. John taught all day Thursday and spent Friday morning meeting with us about evaluations and expansion. He is in contact with high ranking VA officials and hopes to get our program recognized and more utilized by the VA. John felt that what we are offering is unique and desperately needed. Locally, we have been receiving more referrals from the VA, telling us they recognize the impact of the program we offer. Our goal is to develop a partnership with the VA nationwide to conduct more marriage and family programs.

We discussed with John the modifications we have made in his program and he is comfortable with them. He especially likes our "Playbook," a booklet we developed to complement the curriculum by giving participants visual reminders of the lessons. The sport metaphor is aligned with the practice of couple "Huddles" in which they practice the tools learned.

We are co-teaching with our new facilitators. Nissa & Mark taught part of the Jan 7 class. Kenneth & Lavida have twice accompanied us to Ft. Hood. Cedrick and Michelle are scheduled to co-teach March 11 in Fort Worth. When we are comfortable each team couple can handle the entire day, they will take over many of the travel/teaching duties so we can concentrate on development, marketing and expansion of our outreach.

MMC WEBSITE

Time is our enemy! Our website desperately needs to be updated. It is written in an outdated computer code that we will soon be unable to update. We met another organization at the R4 Conference, Challenge America, who offered to get it done for about 1/3 of that cost as soon as we have time to complete a comprehensive development questionnaire. We are looking forward to a fresh, new site in early 2017.

COMBINED FEDERAL CAMPAIGN (CFC)

The CFC, SECC (State) and DCC (Dallas) charitable campaigns have changed their programs and will now charge an application fee in addition to taking a percentage of our donations. These sources normally supply less than 5% of MMC's income and a cost-benefits analysis does not justify the cost of participating in these campaigns any longer. We will need to find a way to replace those donations. We will be focusing more on corporate and private donations.

GROWTH

We want to establish a private or corporate donor base that allows us to survive between grants. It costs between \$3,000 – \$5,000 to deliver one program. When our grant was not renewed in July 2015 we were only able to do 2 programs the subsequent year.

Our goal this year is to rebuild a more active board of directors whose input and ideas we can depend on for capacity building and sustainable funding.

EVALUATIONS

We are also working with Dr. Van Epp to develop a clinically eligible evaluation for our program. Our current evaluation provides anecdotal feedback but limits what kind of grants that MMC can apply for. More robust clinical evaluation producing researched based data will show the outstanding successes of Marriage Management in keeping Veterans' and Military Marriages from becoming hidden casualties of war. When a Veteran's marriage fails, he or she is more likely to succumb to destructive behaviors, homelessness and suicide. 30% of military suicides had a failed intimate relationship in the prior month!

Attached is an email testimony from a participant followed by the after-action report and participant evaluations from that same program in San Antonio last month.

Subject: Class in San Antonio Jan 14th

Good Afternoon!

My name is Melanie and I attended your marriage counseling class with my husband on Jan 14th in San Antonio. It's been a few weeks since then and I wanted to let y'all know just how much your class has changed my marriage.

When my husband and I went to your class we had only been married roughly a year but were already failing as a couple. Between a new job for both my husband and I, a toddler and infertility problems, we were absolutely sure we were going to be done. We figured we would give it one last shot and decided to sign up for the class.

That night after the class my husband and I got into one of the worst fights of our life. Chairs were broken, walls were destroyed and we finally said that dreaded ugly "d" word; divorce. Out of desperation I went to my car and grabbed the booklets we were given. After cooling off we went through EVERY SINGLE PAGE in the booklet and talked. And cried. And talked some more. And cried some more. But what we weren't anticipating was the fact that we actually made progress. He was able to express how he felt and so was I.

Since that night we have gone through our books again and again and are slowly making progress. We're even at the point where we're in marriage counseling and our counselor thinks we're making great progress as well. We decided to put our RAM boards on our fridge and every day we move them. It lets us know how the other one is feeling without being confrontational and opens the floor for discussion.

From the bottom of my heart, I cannot thank y'all enough for providing us the tools we need to better ourselves and our marriage.

I appreciate you both so much!

God Bless!

Melanie [].

AFTER ACTION REPORT

MARRIAGE & RELATIONSHIP ENRICHMENT

FOR MILITARY & VETERAN COUPLES

HOST: STEVEN A COHEN MILITARY FAMILY CLINIC AT FAMILY ENDEAVORS, SAN ANTONIO

14 JANUARY 2017

PRESENTED BY:



SERVING THOSE WHO SERVE OUR COUNTRY

BOB AND BARBARA ZIELINSKI, DIRECTORS/FACILITATORS

FUNDED BY: TEXAS VETERANS COMMISSION, FUND FOR VETERANS ASSISTANCE

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PROGRAM SUMMARY

Event Date/Venue

- Program was held Saturday, 14 January 2017 from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm by Marriage Management.
- Class was held at the Cohen Clinic Building. Venue and childcare were provided the Cohen Clinic.

Curriculum

- Multi-services approved and research-based Couple Links Military Curriculum was presented.
- Sessions were tailored to suit the target audience and time frame. (See Appendix A)

Attendance

- 76 persons registered for the program. 5 couples cancelled and rescheduled.
- 37 persons attended the program: (15 Married Couples, 3 engaged couple, 1 married, attending alone).
- See Appendices D and E for more demographics

Evaluations

- The evaluations from participants completing the class indicate a 100% positive impact, with 91.6% giving this program the highest score. This clearly demonstrates that all attendees benefitted significantly. See Appendix B.
- Transcripts of the participants' actual comments are attached to this report as Appendix C.

Marketing and Support

- This was our first class working with the Cohen Clinic in San Antonio. We were amazed and please by the large attendance. Special recognition to Alanah Lavinier for the outstanding work marketing the program.
- Lunch and free childcare for 19 children was provided by the Cohen Center. MMC provided the coffee, snacks and fruit.

Follow Up

• Each Participant received a certificate of completion and a special Challenge Coin as a reminder to challenge each other to use the resiliency skills and tools learned in the workshop to ensure healthy communication and conflict resolution.

Additional data and facilitator comments are included on following pages of this report.

Very Respectfully Submitted,

Bob (US Army 1970) and Barbara Zielinski

Marriage Management Executive Directors and Instructors

Appendix A

PROGRAM SESSIONS SCHEDULE

Curriculum: Couple Links - Military by Love Thinks LLC.

Program Based on the RAM - Relationship Attachment Model:

Know - Trust - Rely - Commit - Touch

Session 1 - Relentlessly Pursuing Intimacy: Knowing

Session 2 - Respectfully Cultivating Trust

Session 3 - Reciprocally Meeting Needs: Relying

Session 4 - Resiliently Charting Our Course: Committing

Session 5 - Romantically Reviewing Our Union: Intimacy

Wrap Up, and Evaluations

Certificate and Coin Presentation

Appendix B PARTICIPANT EVALUATIONS

37 Attendees (15 Married couples, 3 engaged/dating couples, 1 married attending alone) 33 evaluations received

What challenges did you face prior to participating in this program?

- "Understanding"
- "Depression/divorce."
- "Communication"
- "Communication struggles."
- "Understanding, mood swings and how to handle positives."
- "Communication with spouse was highly ineffective."
- "Re-integration from a 12-month deployment and money."
- "Re-integration with wife post deployment."
- "Communication & anger. PTSD has really affected our relationship in a negative way."
- "Miscommunication, anger issues."
- "I don't know how to communicate with my spouse."
- "Communication, being able to express myself."
- "Communication and understanding each other."
- "Mental health setbacks."
- "Trust, love and forgiveness."
- "Learning how to speak to my partner without blaming."
- "Trouble communicating effectively; trouble talking about finances; trouble understanding my spouse."
- "Some communication & trust issues in regards to finance."
- "Anxiety to attend."
- "Communication- telling my spouse what I need; not understanding my spouse is different."
- "Avoiding being complacent and just going through the motions without trying to improve my marriage."
- "Addressing communication quality & frequency."
- "Listening & understanding each other."
- "Communication, intimacy."
- "Communication and trying to understand my spouse's needs. To talk to each other without aggressive speech."
- "Admitting there was really a problem that was also at least partially my fault and not 100% my spouse's fault."
- "Communication and remembering why I married my husband."
- "Biggest challenge has been physical intimacy."
- "Finding programs that offered marriage counseling that fit our schedule and needs."
- "Not knowing what to expect when married (we are engaged)."
- "Not knowing what to expect, feeling like it might not be applicable since we are only engaged and not yet married. Struggled as a couple with broken trust early on in the engagement."

How did this program help you overcome these challenges?

- "Open my eyes."
- "New ways of building trust & commitment new goals & response."
- "Improve communication."
- "Helped me open up to my husband."
- "Showed me different steps to take when these situations come up."
- "I don't know yet. Haven't applied it but the consensus is communication will be highly effective, enhancing overall quality of our relationship."
- "We were introduced to the <u>Relationship Attachment Model</u> and participated in exercises."
- "It provided knowledge and strategies to apply."
- "I learned how to show affection, listen better, explain how I am feeling & have better results that lead to a happier life with my partner."
- "Strong curriculum, knowledgeable instructors."
- Provide examples and help one practice and understand what I am doing wrong."
- "It gave me tools and pointed out resources available to me and my wife."
- "Tools & techniques to improve our life at home."
- "I was able to recognize a reason I get angry."
- "Gave me some tools to use in order to strengthen my marriage."
- "It opened up a dialogue by having him repeat what he heard."
- "I learned how to use active listening during communication and how to discuss plans and work together by setting time aside to work on issues."
- "Roadmaps & budgets are important but also good to have fun. Helped us get on the same page & agree to come up with a plan."
- "Wonderful group discussions allowed me to open up."
- "The Huddles helped a lot; the material in the booklets."
- "It re-energized my desire to be a better husband."
- "Provided Huddle opportunities to practice the desired communication."
- "We had a chance to be humbled."
- "It helped us with tools for better communication."
- "We found out we have many similar (& normal) issues. And we can grow & learn."
- "By seeing perspectives and different [love] languages spoken by men & women."
- "Huddles"
- "I was given the tools to work on changing the situation."
- "Provided tools to help marriage issues."
- "Began or continued certain conversations that we put off or tried to avoid."
- "Learning how to effectively talk about little problems and communicate triggers before they become different or bigger. Tangibly getting tools to make marriage work."

What I liked about this class is:

- "Interaction"
- "Calm, informative, open atmosphere."
- "The Huddles"
- "How it enabled us to get on the same page."

- "They [facilitators] kept it interesting and it was very interactive for couples."
- "The split up of males and females into groups to work with other, like-minded spouses getting feedback—Huddles; practicing exercises."
- "Instructors shared personal stories regarding the relationship attachment model (RAM)."
- "the Huddles with my spouse."
- "The material, Huddles & humor."
- "The 'I' vs. 'you' message."
- "There is a lot of good information given to help me try to overcome obstacles in my marriage."
- "That my wife and I completed something together."
- "Free childcare provided in the same building."
- "The open atmosphere."
- "The instructors. They were very knowledgeable and made me feel very comfortable."
- "That they [facilitators] related it to their own marriage **not just teaching at us.**"
- "The fun instructors and that the class was not boring. I liked that childcare was provided."
- "The real-life examples & ability to participate."
- "Participation from everyone."
- "The Huddle exercises; [facilitators' names] used examples of what they have been through & shared their stories."
- "The instructors were **open and honest**, using their own experiences and sharing personal examples."
- "Fun, upbeat & skills building."
- "Everything, the Huddles."
- "The instructors & their message."
- "I loved that a husband-wife team lead the class. They shared struggles they face and provided tools to help other succeed as they have for many years."
- "It was taught by a couple with the experiences many couples face currently."
- "Real life examples and experiences of the instructors."
- "Interaction with couples."
- "[Facilitators' names] being an actual couple who have been where I am."
- "Openness, also the date and time."
- "The loose, fun & engaging structure. Don't feel like a lecture but rather being presented with tools and strategies we can use moving forward."
- "The tools given were easy to use and very tangible. They would apply to any couple, any scenario."

Where would your relationship be if this program did not exist?

- "At a standstill."
- "Spiraling down."
- "I do not know."
- "Very rocky and struggling."
- "At a confused and stuck standpoint on how to approach a disagreement."
- "Strung out further and far from do-able."
- "At the same place, probably longer conflict resolution."
- "Probably over."

- "Downward spiral."
- "Problems would not be addressed."
- "Total darkness."
- "We needed this free childcare, thank you!"
- "We would be more stressed with [one] another and create a toxic family life."
- "The same, without improvement."
- "Still in trouble and lost."
- "We would just keep on going the way we have, not productive."
- "The same that it was without trying to make sure we were honest about all of our issues and concerns."
- "We would still be doing well because we were seeking other resources also."
- "Not in a good state."
- "Ending in divorce."
- "While my marriage is good, I could see it being a standard below level type of marriage where we just co-exist and love each other without improvement."
- "This program helps to improve marriage quality."
- "The court house."
- "We would not be talking right now."
- "Not in a good place. Create more anxiety."
- "Closer to divorce."
- "Broken."
- "We were heading towards divorce. We had discussed the possibility of splitting but wanted to give it another try."
- "Unsure, but their class provided help or a starting point."
- "Probably more in the dark about certain issues we were actually each holding on to."
- "Much more in the dark about our communication."

How important is this program? Why?

- "Very- gave us a new point of view."
- "To keep cohesion in the military family."
- "I do not know"
- "Very, it helped my husband and I fix our marriage."
- "I think it's very important. Many couples do not know how to reconcile and fix minor or major issues."
- "Extremely important. The government got better at finally getting soldiers with PTSD help... This class is the answer to the calling of marriage help."
- "Very important. It's important to have a safe and reliable program that focuses on military families (couples) staying strong."
- "Very, military marriages are challenging."
- "Very! I think every relationship could benefit from this curriculum."
- "Very important, it explains issues within relationships that are not easily explained."
- "Important, I don't have a good example of a healthy marriage."
- "It could be the difference between a tragedy and a dream realization."
- "Great program- prevent toxic marriages/divorces."
- "People need to talk about how much work a marriage is. It's not happily ever after you say "I do."

- "Very important because it helps you find ways to figure out what's wrong in a relationship."
- "It's easier to quit nowadays, than to try and work on it."
- "Very important to military related couples are able to withstand the struggles of marriage."
- "Very important for military families because of relatability."
- "Help couples realize and work in rebuilding marriage."
- "I was giving up on my marriage but this class reinforced & encouraged me to work on it."
- "It has been a great experience to help re-energize my marriage and I have a renewed desire to be a better husband to my wife."
- "Very! Especially with the high rate of divorces. Many problems are due to communication problems."
- "It helps us to commit in replacing resentments with positive words for our relationship."
- "Very important because marriage isn't easy and being married to a soldier is even harder."
- "I want my marriage to work. I (we) do not want to fail. I am committed to my spouse."
- "May save our 12-year marriage."
- "Very important, shows commitment from my partner."
- "Very, if the people truly want to make it work."
- "Very helpful tools."
- "Very! As we aren't married yet, we felt it was important to have pre-marital sessions to especially since I am marrying into the military."
- "Marriages & family support are what hold the military together & this gives specific military perspectives tools to do that, thus making the military <u>AND</u> marriages stronger."

Other comments and suggestions:

- "Please keep it available."
- "Great program! Loved the material!"
- "This is a very awesome program! Thank you!"
- "Thank you so much. May God always bless you with wisdom so that you could **continue your** mission of saving marriages."
- "All around great! Superb class!"
- "Thank you for the childcare! We would not have been able to attend without it."
- "I really enjoyed it [the class] and would enjoy having more classes like this."
- "None. I loved this course. Thank you."
- "Childcare should have a movie for them to watch."
- "Keep up the great work. So blessed to have this program."
- "None" (2)
- "Thank you!"
- "Thank you for making us feel normal & we can be successful." We need to be patient & understanding."

Appendix C Impact Data

Participant Class Ratings Likert Scale

14 January, 2017 Cohen Center Clinic, Family Endeavors, San Antonio

	1	2	3	4	5
Regarding Today's Lesson:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I found it Helpful	0	0	0	5	29
I understood it very well	0	0	0	5	29
I will use what I learned	0	0	0	3	31
I would recommend this class to others	0	0	0	2	32
The Instructors encouraged questions and comments	0	0	0	2	32
The instructors are knowledgeable about the material being presented	0	0	0	1	33
Overall, I liked today's lesson	0	0	0	2	32
Total	0	0	0	20	218
Pct. Of Total	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	8.4%	91.6%
	Disagree		Neutral	Agree	

- 100% of the responses in seven categories rated the class positively with 96.1% giving it the highest rating.
- Every participant indicated they would recommend the class to others.
- There were no negative responses.
- All participants indicated they understood the lessons, found them helpful and will use what they learned.
- Instructors were rated as strongly competent.

Appendix D Marketing Data

Where Participants heard about the class:

Hospital Volunteer Coordinator

Villa Serena Domiciliary Treatment Program

VA (6 responses)

Family Endeavors (3)

BAMC News (Brook Army Medical Center) 2 responses

Spouse (4 responses)

Facebook

New Parent Support (2 responses)

Military Mens Group

Sam Houston Clinic Counselor

Boys Town

Camp Bullis

E-mail from son's school

Christian Evers Elementary School Counselor

FRG Family Day (2 responses)

Army e-mail distribution

Did not indicate: 8

Appendix E Services and Ranks Represented:

Air Force: 9	
O-3	DUAL MILITARY COUPLES: 5
E-8	
E-7 (4 members)	FEMALE MILITARY: 6
E-6 (2 members) E-4	MILITARY/VETERANS: 19
	NON-MILITARY SPOUSES: 13
Army: 6	
<mark>E-9</mark>	Deployments:
E-6 (2 members)	5 persons had no deployments= 0
W-2	4 persons had 1 deployment = 4
E-4 (2 members)	4 persons had 2 deployments = 8
	1 person had 3 deployments = 3
Army Reserves: 2	1 person had 5 deployments = 5
E-7	1 Person had 6 deployments = 6
E-3	1 Person had 10 deployments = 10
Marine Corp: 2	
E-8	TOTAL DEPLOYMENTS = 36
E-5	

Instructors' Comments:

The January 14, 2017 class was held in partnership with the Cohen Military Family Clinic. Funding was provided by the TVC Fund for Veterans Assistance. Snacks, fruit and waters were provided for the attendees by Marriage Management. Lunches and free childcare were provided by the Cohen Clinic. Special thanks to Alanah Lavinier and the staff at the Cohen Clinic for their outstanding, tireless efforts to promote this program. It was a pleasure to work with such a cooperative and helpful partner.

The participants were very engaged in the lessons and class debates were lively. Participation in group activities and shout-outs was enthusiastic with excellent, meaningful discussions. One-on-one coaching by a facilitator was offered when couples appeared to be struggled with an assignment and was usually sufficient to get them back on track. Attendees practiced using each tool privately as it was presented in a safe, supportive environment. They appreciated the time to talk in confidence with their partner in private "Huddles." Several comments noted that they would not have been able to attend without the childcare provided. This was a critical service that significantly encouraged attendance and was greatly appreciated. We realize it was a considerable expense for the Center. Normally we hire off site childcare staff and pay them per/child fee for the day and provide the lunches and snacks. Such an agreement would lessen the impact on the budget. This is a crucial service.

Several comments noted difficulties with finances. We would recommend the Cohen Clinic consider offering a free Money Management class to help in this area. Financial arguments are one of the leading causes of divorce. Although the workbook we use has a financial exercise, it is not comprehensive and our current schedule limits the needed time to cover the material.

The program benefits were reflected in the outstanding comments and evaluations. Many of the couples

did not want to leave after class was dismissed. They stayed to converse with others and the instructors. Several expressed interests in follow-up sessions. We see this discussion as a positive reflection of the class impact. Follow-up could be handled by establishing regular "marriage renewal" groups. Certificates and special commemorative coins were presented to each couple completing the class.

All couples expressed appreciation for the class, instructors and what they learned indicating a significant impact. We are prepared to continue this mission to the ongoing need to strengthen military marriage bonds. This Marriage Management training provides critical preventative measures against the breakup of military families. Statistics show that when a military member's or Veteran's marriage breaks up, there are higher incidents of destructive behaviors, abuse, dependencies, homelessness and suicide. 30% of completed military suicides had a failed intimate relationship in the prior month. A recent study, which included a control group with no marriage education, showed that the divorce rate for military couples decreased by two-thirds for couples who participated in a marriage education class. This clearly demonstrates the need for more marriage and relationship education programs in this underserved population.

Thank you so much for the opportunity to work with The Steven A. Cohen Military Family Clinic in San Antonio. It was an honor to lead this class in an impactful and meaningful training. We look forward to continuing service to military families in San Antonio and returning to work with your staff.

Very Respectfully,

Bob (US Army, 1970) and Barbara Zielinski

Executive Directors and Facilitators

Marriage Management

Serving Those Who Serve Our Country

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Thank you for your continued support of this critical mission!

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