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Cameron County Receives \$2.5 Million Grant to Strengthen Marriages
Funds are part of federal government's "Healthy Marriage Initiative"

DALLAS – December 11, 2006 – Active Relationships, a proactive family wellness organization, announced today that Cameron County will be the beneficiary a U.S. Department of Health and Human Services grant. The sum of \$2.5 million, across a five-year grant, is part of a national "Healthy Marriage Initiative". Cameron County's Hispanic Active Relationships Project (H.A.R.P.) was one of 124 grantees to receive an award - out of more than 1,600 applicants across the nation.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, married Americans became a minority for the first time in 2005. Passed in January 2006, the "Healthy Marriage Initiative" will provide more than \$100 million per year in federal funding to stem the tide of nationwide family dissolution, through programs that promote skills for healthy marriage. The national initiative will utilize existing evidence-based skills education programs, such as Active Relationships, that have proven effective across communities. This is the first time that Congress has authorized spending on marriage education.

"We are thrilled that our efforts in Texas have resulted in an opportunity for Cameron County to build great marriages and therefore strengthen families," said Kelly Simpson, founder of the H.A.R.P. project and director of Active Relationships, the organization that piloted the H.A.R.P. program. "There is so much to know about creating a successful marriage and unfortunately most of us never had education in these skills and neither did our parents, or their parents. We are just expected to know how."

"Counselors, doctors, teachers... anyone can be better at marriage and it is so important for our culture and well-being," added Simpson. "Healthy, loving marriages are the cornerstone of strong families and strong, happy families are the cornerstone of the community. If marriages cease to exist because people do not believe they can work, our families are at extreme risk, and our community and ultimately the infrastructure of our nation are at risk."

Statistics indicate that children of single parents are far more likely to grow up in poverty and become victims of abuse and neglect than children in households led by both parents, assuming those parents know and practice the skills for healthy relationships.

Simpson, H.A.R.P.'s project director, and Gloria Miranda-Cavazos, H.A.R.P. Cameron County program director, will bring trainings for key community leaders to Cameron County. Once trained, these community leaders will implement seminars for couples and youth within their own communities.

“H.A.R.P. is a very unique resource to our community. There are existing resources for couples in crisis, like domestic violence services or couples needing counseling, but there has been a lack of resources for middle of the road couples, until now,” said Miranda-Cavazos. “H.A.R.P., through marriage education, is going to help couples in our community build stronger marriages for healthier families.”

H.A.R.P.’s goal is to reach 400 Cameron County couples per year to strengthen existing marriages, prepare those considering marriage, or help those who are not married and who have children together establish stable co-parenting relationships for their children. Additionally, the program plans to educate 240 Cameron County youth on important conflict resolution, emotion management and vital communication skills for healthy relationships.

For more information, visit www.HARPCC.com on the Internet, send e-mail to HARPCC@ActiveRelationships.com, or call (956) 544-7165.

Upcoming H.A.R.P. offerings include:

Active Communication - January 5-6 (a 16 hour “Train the Trainer” seminar to become certified to teach seminars for couples)

Active Relationships for Young Adults - January 25-27 (to become certified to teach seminars for youth)

ABOUT ACTIVE RELATIONSHIPS

Active Relationships (AR) is a Texas-based proactive family wellness organization that provides educational seminars around the world for individuals, couples, families, churches, businesses, military personnel, government agencies and non-profit organizations. AR programs have been successful and internationally used across the U.S. including in (but not limited to) the Air Force, U.S. Air Force Europe, Army, National Guard and Head Start.

Utilizing more than a decade of experience educating couples and training professionals, including military personnel in the U.S., Asia and Europe, Active Relationships’ founder Kelly Simpson, a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, is an internationally known author and speaker. Simpson trains community leaders to teach couples, singles and youth seminars that include proven skills and effective exercises to make successful relationships possible. For more information please visit www.activerelationships.com on the Internet or call 877.724.7789.

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