

Family Program Director

(extracted from Supreme Pub 962-2010)

Strengthening Family Life

Take a look at what's happening to our family life. Do we communicate? Do we share? Do we take time to get involved with each other? Are there opportunities for improvement? What is God's plan for us?

Today's society makes it hard to be a family. Television takes up a lot of our time together. The hustle and bustle of business, rushed meals, school, work, committee meetings, sports and shopping are cramming our days and weeks.

The family is under heavy attack today. The battle is largely over values and commitments. To survive, the family needs support. Its primary source of strength must be found in a growing religious and parish life. But it also can be helped substantially by an organization such as ours.

Help prevent the death of the family by administering preventive medicine. Conduct those programs and activities which aid in rebuilding the family spirit from within, making it vital and strong enough to resist society's ills. Encourage members and their families to choose as their model the Holy Family, copying their attitude of interdependence, sharing and respect for authority.

Work to strengthen family life. Nourish wholesome home life through the sponsorship of activities involving entire families on a scheduled and continuing basis. Encourage communications and routines which involve family members within their own homes, and bring families together in social and recreational events in the community.

Stimulate togetherness within family units. There are many ways in which families can enjoy time together in a scheduled, organized way, even when the age range of members of the family varies widely.

FAMILY PROGRAMS

- Celebrate **K of C Family Week in August**. Plan a family Mass, a picnic, a dinner, a prayer service or other activities that will promote and highlight both family interaction and the family focus of the Order. Schedule degree exemplifications during this week that commemorate the birth (Aug. 12) or death (Aug. 14) of the Order's founder, Father Michael J. McGivney. Family Week degree exemplifications can be used to welcome family members, the focus of recruitment efforts for these degrees.
- Support your local chapter of the **Worldwide Marriage Encounter**, an interfaith group supported by the Church, whose goal is helping, mending and spiritually uplifting the lives of married couples.
- Organize **family corporate Communion breakfasts**. Planned as quarterly events (or on the 5th Sunday in a month), these gatherings bring together council or parish families to celebrate the Eucharist and share time and a meal together.
- Plan an annual **marriage vow renewal program** for couples in your council or entire parish. Work with your chaplain to plan a Mass or prayer service during which married couples will renew their vows. A certificate to present to each couple (#2745 E,F,S) is available through the Supreme Council Supply Department.
- **Adopt a needy family**. Contact your parish, social service agencies or similar community groups to offer to assist an impoverished family. Once a family is selected, work with the parish or social service group to determine the long-term and short-term needs of the family. Areas to take into consideration include employment and job training, clothing (both winter and summer), food, education for children and adults where necessary, and housing.

- Encourage your council's families to **visit relatives or have family reunions**. How many times have you heard, "We only see each other at weddings and wakes?"
- Hold a "**Family Contest**." Determine which family in the council can take the best picture, catch the largest fish, bake the prize-winning cake, raise the most charity funds, or bowl the best score in a family tournament. The idea is to make sure the entire family is involved.
- Plan **outings or trips** designed especially for entire families. Visit museums, cathedrals, college campuses, parks, zoos, company headquarters, etc.
- Keep kids safe. Preventable accidents are the leading health risk facing our children. In the United States, the **SAFE KIDS Campaign** is working to reduce this risk through education, legislation and behavior modification. The program focuses on the five leading childhood accident areas: traffic accidents, drowning, burns, choking and poisoning, and falls. For more information about the campaign and childhood injury in general, write Safe Kids Worldwide, 1301 Pennsylvania Ave. NW, Suite #1000, Washington, DC 20004. The Web site is www.safekids.org.
- **Volunteer as a family**. Involving entire families in your council's service programs can benefit the person or organization the program assists, your council and the families themselves. Working together on projects gives parents and their children an opportunity to spend time together and shows the community at large that the K of C is a family organization. Family Matters offers a workbook on family volunteering for interested groups. For more information write: Family Matters, Points of Light Foundation, 1400 I Street, NW, Suite 800, Washington, DC 20005, or visit www.pointsoflight.org.
- Compile, print and distribute a "**Council Family Book of Memories**." Gather written statements from council families regarding their histories and what makes them unique. Ask family members to relate personal experiences and ideas for family programs. Compile this information into an easily reproducible booklet (even stapled pages would suffice) and distribute it to all the council's families.
- Remind parents of young children that there are some **things they should teach in the home to prepare children for the world**. Older families with more experience in parenting could be a good source of ideas and advice in these areas. The *Focus on the Family* newsletter provides commentary on the issues facing families today. For ordering information call (800) 232-6459, or visit www.family.org. Alliance for Children and Families offers a series of **Family Wellness** pamphlets aimed at helping families better communicate. It can also provide the names for local family service agencies. For more information contact Family Service America Inc., 11700 West Lake Park Drive, Milwaukee, WI 53224, telephone: (414) 359-1040, Web site: www.alliance1.org.
- Stress **safety among family members**. Teach youngsters how to make a phone call. Keep a list of emergency phone numbers near each phone. Children should learn basic first aid and the family's rules concerning use of the medicine cabinet.
- Commemorate **National Family Week**. To honor families, the week of Thanksgiving has been proclaimed "National Family Week." This time is intended to promote recognition of and appreciation for the family as the foundation of our free society. Visit www.nationalfamilyweek.org.

EDUCATION

- In keeping with a long-standing commitment to build stronger marriages and families, the Knights of Columbus launched a new initiative called Fathers for Good. The centerpiece of the initiative is an interactive Web site, **www.fathersforgood.org**. Available through the site are the St. Joseph Series Booklets for Men, which can be ordered on-line, and include the titles *A Life of Prayer*, *A Life of Virtue* and *A Man of God*. Send questions and input regarding the site to fatherhood@kofc.org.
- **Support education vocally in front of your own children**. If a young person hears his parents criticize his school and teachers, he is not likely to have confidence in them or get much out of his class work. Even before a youngster

starts school, he can sense whether his parents consider school work a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity or a tedious bore to be endured. Instill a respect for education in children.

- **Encourage potential dropouts to stay in school.** Persuade those who have dropped out to return. Help students overcome the barriers to proper education they may face — learning problems, home life, etc. Stress to these students and their families what the future holds for dropouts. Thousands of students drop out of school every day. The unemployment rate for dropouts is twice that of high school graduates.
- **Question, examine and reinforce what is taught in school.** Don't hesitate to voice your opinion to officials if you are not satisfied with the education being provided to children in your community.
- **Take an active interest in the sex education programs in local schools. Consult experts in religious education and adolescent psychology.** Council members and their families could spearhead the development of materials and programs that could assist and fill out whatever local schools may be doing in the area of sex education.
- Award **scholarships to Catholic high schools and colleges** for qualified Squires and sons and daughters of council members. Hold an annual scholarship competition.
- **Support Catholic schools.** Help continue the tradition of Catholic education for children by raising money to help defray the cost of tuition at a local Catholic grade school or high school. Present scholarships to qualified students, volunteer council manpower to help schools with maintenance and upkeep, and support tax assistance for parents who choose to educate their children in Catholic schools.

COMMUNICATIONS

- Work to **improve relationships between teenagers and their parents.** Sponsor a panel discussion that could bring parents, teachers and teenagers together. Perhaps there might be enough interest to have a weekend retreat or day of recollection for parents and their teenage sons and daughters.
- Urge members to **reserve Sundays for their families;** to participate and share in the joy of life together. Remind them that life is too short to spend time thinking about what one should have done. Encourage each member to enjoy his family's company and let them enjoy him.
- **Reach out to families and children of divorced or single parents.**
- Provide **instruction on the theology, meaning and purpose of marriage.**
- Offer support and **discussion groups for married couples.**
- Support services that provide premarital counseling programs.

FAMILY OF THE MONTH/YEAR

- Participate in the Order's "**Family of the Month**" and "**Family of the Year**" programs, honoring council families who exemplify the values taught by our Church and our Order. Full details on the program are provided in the *Family of the Month* booklet (#1993) provided to each council in its annual "Surge . . . with Service" kit. Certificates for presentation to your monthly winners (#1843, E, F, S-25¢) and your "Family of the Year" (#1843A, E, F, S-25¢) are available through the Supply Department.
- **Provide additional recognition to your "Family of the Month/Year" recipients** in several ways. Contact broadcast stations in the area, particularly diocesan radio and television stations, and ask them to consider making announcements recognizing "Family of the Month/Year." Post a sign on the front lawn of "Family of the Month/Year" recipients to let the community know that they have earned this honor.

RECREATION

- Host a “**Ladies Night.**” This could become one of the most popular and enthusiastically anticipated affairs on a council’s activity schedule. Not only does it serve to acquaint the ladies with the place where their husbands spend so much time, but it also gives them the feeling of participation in another phase of their social life. When organizing the program, consider the type of evening you want: refreshments or a meal, music or entertainment, and who will be invited. It is important to decide upon a definite date and announce it well in advance.
- Plan a **picnic, a summer kick-off weekend or day for council families.** Put individuals in charge of food, entertainment, activities, outings, etc. Have a good time!
- Consider starting a **babysitting program** for council members’ families to give parents some time off. The service could be offered weekly or monthly, depending on local needs and the availability of volunteer sitters. Seek volunteer babysitters from among the council membership. Organize husband/wife teams and schedule each on a rotating basis.

SURVIVORS’ ASSISTANCE

- **Maintain contact with widows and dependent children** of members. A committee of council members might offer to help in making funeral arrangements, assist a widow in the completion of insurance forms, social security and other necessary paperwork. Keep a deceased Knight’s family informed about council activities they can attend or participate in; conduct social events particularly for the widows and children of members. Survey the needs of surviving family members and determine in what ways your council can help meet those needs. The council membership, as well as the Knight’s family, will be enriched by maintaining ties. Often the council’s field agent offers a program of survivors’ assistance, so be sure to contact him.

Upon receipt of a death notice of a member at the Supreme Council office, the supreme knight, on behalf of the board of directors, sends a letter of condolence to the widow or next of kin, informing them that their loved one is being enrolled in a Mass said at St. Mary’s Church, the birthplace of the Order in New Haven, Conn., every day throughout the year. Upon request, the Supreme Council adds the names of widows to the mailing list for *Columbia* magazine. State, provincial and local units are encouraged to also keep widows on mailing lists to receive council publications.

- **Extend to widows and their families any scholarships** awarded by state and local councils. Widows and children of deceased members are eligible for Supreme Council educational benefits, such as scholarships and fellowships. For more information regarding Supreme Council programs, refer to the *Financial Aid to Education* booklet (#951) or write directly to the Supervisor of the Scholarship Department, P.O. Box 1670, New Haven, CT 06507-0901.
- Remember the **children of your deceased brothers.** Include them in the youth activities of your council. Occasional visits and progress checks will make them feel wanted and important.
- **Invite the eligible sons of deceased members to join your Squires circle.** This activity will assist them in building their leadership skills and carrying on the family tradition of Columbianism.

MEMORIALS

- Establish a **memorials committee** within your council. A member may never need a strong show of fraternal spirit from his Order and his brother Knights so much as upon the death of someone in his family. By the same token, the family of a member may never recognize the genuineness of that spirit nor realize its benefits so much as upon that member’s death. The primary responsibility of the memorials committee is to attend wakes and funerals of brother Knights or their family members. Special council prayer cards should be provided to members of the memorials committee, with prayers chosen by the council chaplain as appropriate for wakes. Such cards are usually designed

by the council chaplain and printed locally. The **Knights of Columbus Memorial Service booklet (#2942)**, available from the Supply Department, includes a wake service for deceased Knights.

In addition to wake and funeral attendance, many other services of the council may be welcome to the bereaved, and the chairman of the group should make it a point to learn as soon as possible what further aid the council may contribute. Individual council policy should be set and be familiar to the chairman so that he may know exactly what commitments may or may not be made on behalf of the council.

- Offer **Masses for departed members** and their families.
- Sponsor an **annual memorial Mass** and Communion breakfast.
- Establish **scholarships in memory of deceased members**.
- Urge **enrollment of members in purgatorial Masses** and offer spiritual bouquets for them and their relatives.
- Send "**Resolution of Condolence**" certificates to the family of a deceased member on behalf of the entire council. These certificates (#1450 E,F,S) are available in English, French and Spanish, 25¢ each, from the Supreme Council Supply Department.
- Donate **Knights of Columbus rosaries to families grieving** the loss of a loved one. Approach your chaplain or pastor and offer to provide a rosary for each funeral/wake service he conducts.