



# UME NEWS

ISSUE 7 - SEPTEMBER 2023 - CONNECTING



## The Power of Connection

BY RICK AND NANCY KAY GRACE

Connection is important in this fragmented world. The Bible teaches the importance of relationships, whether it's connecting more deeply with our spouse or being with likeminded people who value marriage. Amos 3:3 asks the question, "Can two walk together without agreeing on the direction?" In our marriages, communication is critical for the husband and wife to connect and walk in the same direction. Here are some Weekend concepts represented in the acronym C.O.N.N.E.C.T.

**Communicate** Tools for stronger communication are given on the Weekend. This includes talking, listening, dialogue, and being "in the moment" with your spouse.

**Openness** Openness to one another and to God strengthens marriages. As we draw closer to our spouse with better connection, we also draw closer to God.

**Nonverbal Communication** - The unspoken actions of body language are a huge part of communication, whether it is shown in an exasperated eye roll or a tender kiss.

**Notebook** - The Weekend Notebook is a tool for writing our feelings. It is a neutral participant in dialogue, containing more than just words on paper. It is a vehicle to bring two hearts together.

**Encouragement** - As we read our love letters, and listen attentively to each other, we often take on the role of being our spouse's cheerleader, encouraging them to go on.

**Cherish** - The Weekend reminded us about caring for each other and investing in our marriage. When we are cherished, we become stronger, knowing we are not taken for granted.

**Team** - The husband and wife are a team, hoping for the same goals and being at each other's side. We compete in showing honor to each other.

Connecting heart to heart with each other is powerful. We sense we are stronger emotionally to handle the challenges of life, but the connection must be nurtured to keep it growing. We hope you find this issue of UME News full of resources that help you do just that.

## In This Issue:

Executive Couple Update

PAGE 02

From the Executive Director

PAGE 03

Volunteer Update

PAGE 04

Asia Pacific Update

PAGE 05

Board Update

PAGE 06

Marriage Enhancement

PAGE 07

Committee Updates

PAGE 08



# connecting

(/kə'nektiNG/)

*adjective*

1. joining or  
linking things  
together



**DAN & PAT VAN VLECK**  
International Executive Couple

## Update from the Executive Couple

BY DAN & PAT VAN VLECK

Connecting with others is one of the great side effects of being a part of the United Marriage Encounter ministry. It has built our relationship stronger with other UME Couples, with each other and most importantly God.

Summer has usually been a great time for us to connect with each other, as spouses. This year, because of a job change for Pat, we have had even more couple-time during our break from school. Whether it has been riding together on a road trip or sitting in our back yard sharing devotions and dialogue, we have been blessed by our time alone together to connect. We encourage you to take time for each other, go on an adventure (big or small), and spend time connecting with each other.

Connecting with other Encountered Couples is a time when we feel joyful and uplifted. Our shared Weekend experience gives us a common foundation as couples. We enjoy connecting through Core, Community Events, the Board meeting, dinners with other Encountered Couples, and even mini golf. After the UME-MESF Int'l Board of Directors meeting, we had the pleasure of joining one of the IA-IL Cores and

some other Board Members at Happy Joe's in Coal Valley, IL, for pizza and mini-golf. The sounds of laughter and frivolity rang across the putting greens as we tried to best each other in form and accuracy. Bottom line, we all scored a hole in one in the connecting with friends area!

We look forward to the Sunday changes on our upcoming Weekends! These changes should give Weekend Couples more opportunity to connect with Communities as they share in Worship and fellowship at the end of the Weekend. We encourage you to be a Weekend Prayer Couple and enjoy the benefits of connecting. Not sure how to become a Weekend Prayer Couple? Or what the changes are we mentioned? Reach out to your local Community Board or to us ([dpvanvleck@unitedmarriage.com](mailto:dpvanvleck@unitedmarriage.com)) or to the Office 1-563-264-8889 to learn more.

So, as we move into our Fall 2023 Weekend season, we hope you each are able to connect with pre-Encountered couples, UME couples, family and friends.

Peace, love and joy,  
Dan & Pat



**STEVE & PAM CHAPMAN**  
MESF Executive Director

## From the Desk of the Executive Director

BY STEVE CHAPMAN

Recently, our leadership team studied the book *Lead Like IT Matters*. Although Pam C and I could not participate, we read the book. It had me pondering: What “IT” is. I have been on a quest to help me understand what “IT” is and where “IT” finds itself in our ministry. First, you must know that some places (churches, restaurants, stores, hotels) and others have “IT”, and others don’t. You can feel “IT” when you are around “IT” but you can’t seem to identify “IT”. “IT” leaves places and sometimes finds itself back. “IT” draws you in, and for many, “IT” helps us feel warm, loved, and connected.

As I look at our ministry “IT” is HOLY. Meaning that I believe we do “IT” as a calling, something God wants from us.

However, I also believe a very important piece is hospitality. Jesus practiced hospitality like no other. He touched the sick, the poor, the lonely. He brought hope to the hopeless. He accepted people where they were and encouraged them to be better. He loved like we all should love. If we are Jesus’ followers - not just fans - we are here to serve and connect to others.

Our new Vision statement says transforming, edifying, and nurturing. This will require us as a UME family to connect like we have never connected before. To me having “IT” = Holy Hospitality before, during, and after our Weekend Experience. We need to create a culture of Holy Hospitality.

Consider these verses as you think about what that might look like:

Therefore, whenever we have the opportunity, we should do good to everyone—especially to those in the family of faith. Galatians 6:10 NLT

Above all hold unfailing your love for one another, since love covers a multitude of sins. Practice hospitality ungrudgingly to one another. 1 Peter 4:8-9 RSV

Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters. Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing, some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it. Hebrews 13:1-2 NIV

Would you join us in creating a culture of Holy Hospitality in our Community of Caring couples, both old and new? Connect to a couple you know and be known as having “IT”.

Steve Chapman  
Executive Director

# Volunteer Spotlight

## Ham and Eggs Award

Based on this story, the Ham and Eggs Award began in 1986: A chicken and a pig were walking down the street one day and noticed some poor children who looked as if they hadn't eaten anything for days. Moved with compassion, the chicken said to the pig, "I have an idea! Let's give those children a nice breakfast of ham and eggs." The pig contemplated the chicken's suggestion and said, "Well, for you, that would be a DONATION; but for me, it would be a SACRIFICE!"

It is the time of the year to submit names for the Executive Committee to review at their November face-to-face meeting. Please think of couples you would like to nominate and have your local Board consider nominating them for the award.

Starting in 1986, The United Marriage Encounter Ham & Eggs Award gives International recognition to couples whose involvement in UME has had a positive impact on other married couples and whose sacrifices have made UME what it is today. The Award is presented to recipients at the Valentine event in their local UME Community.

Two types of couples are eligible for the Award.

- The highly visible UME Couple whose name is easily recognized for being a Team Couple, former UME International Board Couple, Community Executive Couple, Task Force Chair couple, Celebration Chair couple, etc.
- The quiet, dedicated, "behind the scenes" couple who keeps going and going (like the Energizer Bunny!) in their quiet ministry through UME. Often these couples are known only in a specific UME Community.

### Criteria

- The couple must have been encountered for at least ten years.
- According to UME Policy, no current UME International Board Couple or Marriage Encounter Support Foundation Staff member may receive the award.

If you know a couple who deserves to be recognized for their sacrificial service to UME, let us know! Request a nomination from [info@unitedmarriage.com](mailto:info@unitedmarriage.com)



## DATENIGHT GIVEAWAY

Fall brings the perfect opportunity to sweeten up your date nights with a s'mores date!

1. Gather your favorite s'mores ingredients - or try some new ones - make this delicious gooey snack
2. Take turns answering the conversation starters below (adapted from Mark and Jill Savage)
3. Send a pic of your s'mores to [datenight@unitedmarriage.com](mailto:datenight@unitedmarriage.com) to be entered in a drawing for a \$25 gift card. **Deadline to enter: November 17**

### S'MORES MENU

THE NUTTY BUDDY peanut butter cup

THE SALTED CARAMEL milk chocolate | caramel square | sea salt

MEXICAN HOT COCOA milk chocolate | cinnamon | nutmeg

THE SAMOA milk chocolate | caramel square | toasted coconut

THE GRASSHOPPER peppermint patty

SWEET N' SALTY ritz cracker | milk chocolate





## ASIA PACIFIC UPDATE

JOYCE RUDDELL

### Connecting Through Core

The Aloha Community enjoyed a great time together at a recent Core! Seven couples gathered to break bread and fellowship. There was fun; there was laughter, and there was fresh strawberry pie! We had light banter and deep talks. Couples Dialogued about the Sabbath Commandment and how they can make time for God to refresh them weekly.

Most of all, Aloha community members connected with God and one another. We shared struggles and prayer needs with each other and sought God together, talking to Him in prayer—interceding for friends and family, praying over work challenges, speaking His healing and provision over one another.

One couple shared their anxious feelings regarding moving from military life to civilian life, and a couple who had already gone through this transition encouraged them. A young couple with a newborn baby found validation of their struggles and comfort from other parents. Spouses who had fought earlier in the day reconciled



during Core, drawn back together by God's love.

Our God is a God of synergy and interdependence, and this shows powerfully through Core. This is God at work. This is relationship and connection with Him and others. *This is our UME community of caring couples.*



### UME LEGACY MEMORIALS

United Marriage Encounter has created a website, UME Legacy, ([www.umelegacy.com](http://www.umelegacy.com)) as an opportunity to honor marriages that have had a positive impact on those around them. Your financial gift may be made in honor or in memory of a couple whose marriage has touched those around them. Those recently honored are:

**HELEN TEEL**  
(HEART OF ILLINOIS)

**ED & LORI CRUMP**  
(SOUTHEAST FLORIDA)

**RUTH UHRENHOLDT**  
(WNY)

# BOARD UPDATE

The UME-MESF Board of Directors met on July 28-August 30, 2023. Here's a recap of the meeting from Steve Chapman, Executive Director.

I believe one of the most exciting things the UME-MESF Board did this year was the time spent looking at the future of this ministry. Pam Beadles' husband, Shawn, came to our office on Friday night after the Board had a day of conducting UME-MESF business and helped us look at our Vision and Mission statement. Shawn had Board members define three outcomes from our Mission statement: Marriages, Families, and Community. These outcomes will be refined and approved for the next stage. This will begin the process of having the staff define their objectives in helping achieve each outcome, and then each of the committee chairs will participate also. When managed correctly, all parts of the ministry will be working toward achieving the desired outcome in the next three to five years. Will this take work? YES! Will this be fast? NO! Do I believe this to be an excellent thing for this ministry? ABSOLUTELY! I am all in, I hope you are, too.

Back to business:

The 2022 audit was presented and accepted.

The financials were presented to the Board, and UME and MESF is on budget.

All Committee reports were presented, and Board directives were sent to Committee Chairs shortly after the meeting.

The UME -MESF Board approved the WORC (Weekend Outline Review Committees) new outline for the Sunday talk lineup, Beyond the Weekend. This will replace Living our Commitment and Serving God and Others. This will mark a huge improvement in delivering our Weekends to the next generation. Please come see for yourself, by attending a Refresher Weekend.

Australia was approved as a Recognized Community and will officially become part of the UME family. WELCOME!

The Executive Committee has been working on Loving Task Descriptions for the Executive Committee, Executive Committee Couple and each Committee. This will be a great tool to lead the ministry into the future.

For a list of the UME-MESF Board members, you can go to: [Unitedmarriage.com/Resources](http://Unitedmarriage.com/Resources) – Board Resources. If you have any concerns about the ministry, please send them to the Executive Committee at [execomm@unitedmarriage.com](mailto:execomm@unitedmarriage.com)

## Did you KNOW?

### ONLINE RESOURCES FOR ALL COUPLES



UME Family private facebook page:



UME Public facebook page: [facebook.com/unitedmarriage](https://facebook.com/unitedmarriage)



UME Instagram:

[instagram.com/unitedmarriageencounter](https://instagram.com/unitedmarriageencounter)

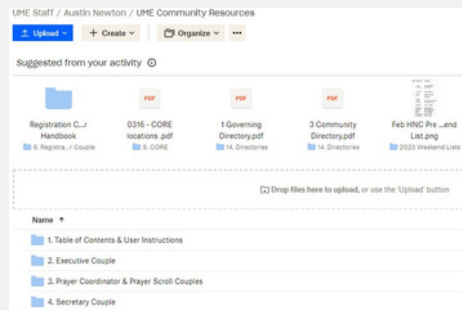


HonoringMarriage.com: Marriage Resources from UME and MESF



### ONLINE RESOURCES FOR COUPLES IN LEADERSHIP

<http://>



[unitedmarriage.com](http://unitedmarriage.com) -> Resources -> UME Community Resources -> password:umedocs

### You're Invited to Become an Annual Marriage Builder

UME pays for room and meals for each couple attending a Weekend. UME also pays for the presenting team couples' travel costs. However, many travel on their own funds and seldom turn in expenses. Weekend Couples are given the opportunity to "Pay It Forward" - historically these donations cover approximately 50% of the costs of the next Weekend. The Annual Marriage Builders (AMB) fill the gap.



The AMB invitation is to donate any amount monthly, quarterly, or annually that can be used to help in funding a United Marriage Encounter Weekend. It is such a vital part of United Marriage Encounter having Weekends that it is the foundation of the next year's budget. Currently, AMB is able to generate \$100,000 in annual revenue, allowing the ministry to budget for 20 Weekends.

We invite you to join us financially. Our Annual Marriage Builders need more donors to create more opportunities for transformation in marriage around the world. We welcome you at any level that you think you could start. If you are already an AMB, would you consider increasing your gift?



## Connection

BY KENDALL & CATHY THOMAS

In simplistic terms, to connect is to join together; unite. Humanity has been created in the image of God with the innate need to connect. There are many levels of connection. In marriage it is the two becoming one flesh and fulfilling a destiny together. In UME terms it means a couple attending a Weekend, engaging, and connecting with each other and God.

Anyone dealing in real estate recognizes this statement; “Location, location, location “. Connection in UME terms are Invite, connect, engage and serve. To take advantage of location is to be in the right place at the right time. The first level of connection is when a couple is invited to attend a UME Weekend. Couples go on Weekends for many different reasons. They may have a good marriage and simply want a better marriage or, may be having trouble talking and sharing with each other. They are looking for ways to improve their communication. Still others may be struggling to keep their marriage together. Whatever the reason, they have decided to attend a UME Weekend.

From the moment the couple registers for the Weekend, they are being introduced to Community through a Welcome letter, What to Expect brochure, and usually a phone call from

the Community Registration Couple.

The second level of connection happens on Friday night as they join with other Weekend couples, experience conversation with a few Community couples and are introduced to the Team Couples by the Community Executive Couple. The first act of engagement happens when they share their spouse’s most endearing quality. The Team Couple’s lovingly encourage the couples to trust the process and participate in the Weekend.

The third level of connection is when the couple is invited to become a part of the local Community of caring couples by attending Core and serving in their UME Community. This is the highest level of connection to God’s heart for marriages beginning in their home, family, church and local UME Community which in turn impacts the world.

The bottom line is we can trust the Holy Spirit to work with us and the Weekend couples to connect on every level. A couple on the Weekend is at the right place at the right time. Because of our innate need to connect, we can count on the supernatural guidance of the Holy Spirit to connect us to others.

Kendall and Cathy Thomas  
Clergy Executive Couple



**KENDALL & CATHY THOMAS**  
Clergy Executive Couple



Attention Federal Employees, or families of Federal employees. We are a certified Charity for the Federal Campaign. Use number **10347** and support UME today!

## CHANGE BRINGS CONNECTEDNESS



**JON & TAMMY FLEISCHER**  
**CRC CHAIRCUPLE**

Connecting. It's something we all seem to long for. Connecting with God. Connecting with our spouse. Connecting with our kids, our parents, our friends, co-workers, churches, etc. Building meaningful connections drives us to create deeper relationships.

That is why CRC is so excited about the Weekend Outline changes. UME has been striving to create more meaningful connections with our Weekend Couples. By experiencing an abridge Core on the Weekend, by sharing more time with their Prayer Couple and the Community at large, it is our prayer that Weekend Couples will begin to connect with the couples in the Community; that they will experience the truth: the Community loves them and they mean it!

In other updates, CRC is going to have a busy 2023-2024 year. We are preparing for the release of our new Core handbook coming within the next month. We also begin work on the much needed Weekend Coordinator Handbook and the Executive Couple Handbook. If you are interested in assisting with the design of the handbooks, we'd love your input. Feel free to contact us! We will be getting started soon.

Also, be on the lookout for more information about Project Equip, our social media advertising campaign that will require everyone's participation!!

God is moving in amazing ways throughout our Ministry. It is an honor to serve on the frontlines alongside each of you. Our prayer is that God blesses you right where you are and that you realize the calling He has on your life whether it be with United Marriage Encounter or elsewhere for there is nothing that brings more joy and connectedness than serving amongst the Body of Christ.

Much love and many blessings,  
Jonathan & Tammy Fleischer  
[jontamume@gmail.com](mailto:jontamume@gmail.com)

# NEW REVISED OUTLINE

In the early 80's the Iowa Illinois Community expanded to Des Moines (Central Iowa) and Aurora (Northeast IL). We made many trips across Iowa and Illinois, car loaded with books, snacks and our two young sons to attend Sing Offs and Afterglows or Reunions. Sometimes we were a prayer couple, but often our purpose was to support these Expansion Communities and connect with the growing group of Community couples we counted as dear friends. We caught up with each other, celebrated a completed Weekend, encouraged each other and had a chance to get to know the newly encountered couples. Over the years we have connected through in-person and Zoom Cores, at Team Renewals, Celebrations, Board and Committee meetings. Universally the times we can be face-to-face are the most productive and satisfying.

Technology has revolutionized the speed, accessibility and quantity of communication. However, in the back and forth chatter over text or Email, quality and the nuances of nonverbal communication are often lost. Our conversations tend to be short and business-like. We connect, but something crucial and precious is missing when our connecting is rarely face-to-face.

Most fall 2023 UME Weekends will be using a new outline for Sunday afternoon. Instead of two talks on Sunday afternoon, there will be only one – Beyond the Weekend. In Beyond the Weekend, the Team Couples share ways to continue the transformation begun on the Weekend. Dialogue, Core and Community are three tools we offer the Weekend couples to continue their renewal experience. Beyond the Weekend also includes an abbreviated Core experience.

The revised outline is structured for an earlier Sing-off, before worship. After the Sing off, Community couples have 20 minutes to visit with the Weekend couples while the Team Couples set up for worship. Then, both Community Couples and Weekend couples worship together in a service including music, prayer, a sharing opportunity for the Weekend Couples, devotional, Communion and Vow Renewal. The Weekend closes with an Afterglow and additional fellowship.

We attended both of the Weekends piloting outline changes. We observed couples connecting with each other in the Demonstration Core and to a greater degree with their prayer couples and other Community as they shared fellowship, then worshipped together.

We encourage each of you to attend the Weekend Closing for a Weekend this fall, even if you need to drive a distance. We judge you will be blessed as you connect with both the newly encountered couples and the previously encountered Community. We believe you will see God is at work in this ministry transforming, edifying and nurturing.

Don't forget to pack some snacks and, since the Weekend now ends at 4 PM, you might even want to set up a dinner date with a couple or couples for some face-to-face fellowship. Enjoy!!!




**JERRY & CAROL WEBB**  
WORC CHAIRCOUPLE

| 2023 WEEKEND ENHANCEMENTS   |   |
|---|---|
|    | <b>CORE</b><br>On Sunday afternoon, the Weekend couples participate in an abbreviated Core meeting as part of a new Weekend talk - Beyond the Weekend.                                  |
|    | <b>SING-OFF IS EARLIER</b><br>The Sing-Off begins at 1:37 (1:48 for Retreat Centers with fixed meal times) giving more opportunities for Weekend Couples to connect with the Community. |
|    | <b>PRAYER COUPLES</b><br>Following the Sing-Off, Prayer Couples will have 20 minutes to visit with their couple and fellowship with other Weekend Couples.                              |
|   | <b>WORSHIP SERVICE</b><br>Community participates in Worship, Communion, Sharing of Vows, and is present for Weekend Couple sharing.   |
|  | <b>REFRESHMENTS</b><br>Community may choose to provide refreshments during the 20 minutes of fellowship before Worship or following Afterglow.  |
|  | <b>WEEKEND ENDS AT 4PM</b><br>Weekend Couples will be finished and free to head home at 4pm.  |

## A NEW RESOURCE

**PRAYER REQUEST CARD**

Name(s) (Optional): \_\_\_\_\_ Would like to pray with someone ☐

Check one of the following two options: ☐ Share only with Team Couples 

OR

☐ Share with Team Couples and local UME members

Give to a Team Couple or place on presentation table at front of room.

As part of the Prayer Committee's heart to connect our UME members to God and one another through prayer, the committee has developed a new community resource with the help of Team Resources Committee (TRC), Weekend Outline Review Committee (WORC), & Community Resources Committee (CRC).

Prayer Request Cards will be introduced to Weekend Couples at the beginning of the Weekend, so they have the opportunity to share prayer needs with the Team Couples and community during the Weekend.

In addition, Community Couples (including Prayer Couples) will receive Prayer Request Cards at Afterglow, so they can connect with one other through prayer after the Weekend. The cards also provide a way for couples to submit prayer requests through the UME website, so they can stay spiritually supported and connected to the UME prayer community throughout the year.

As we prepare for our Fall Weekends, community leadership couples (especially Admin, Team, and Prayer Coordinator Couples) will receive more information about how to distribute, collect, and use these Prayer Request Cards to nurture relationships between spouses, couples, & God.

The Prayer Committee thanks God for this opportunity to provide spiritual support to couples in a personal way, to stay connected during and after Weekends, and to build our communities of caring couples. We look forward to seeing how God uses the Prayer Request Cards to help us battle spiritually alongside our couples for their marriages and families!

Paul and Joyce Ruddell, Prayer Committee Chaircouple





**PAUL & JOYCE RUDDELL**  
PRAYER CHAIR COUPLE

PCG

## UPDATE FROM THE PRAYER COMMITTEE

Dear Global UME Family,

Your MEQ is your passion for marriages—one of God's greatest metaphors of His love for us.

In July 2022, through a God-given vision of Rob & Steph Bandy, the International Board voted to start the new UME Prayer Committee. One major purpose of this committee is to create and maintain processes which nurture a culture of prayer within UME. We are also responsible for cultivating the prayer life of the Global UME Family, local communities, ministry committees, their leaders, and Team Couples.

As Christians, we know from Ephesians 6:12 that our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, authorities, and powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. The Prayer Committee is dedicated to helping our members stay vigilant and strengthening our skills as we fight alongside God in the spiritual battle.

Part of doing so includes considering how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together but encouraging one another. The Prayer Committee strongly believes we are called to partner with God through our prayers. We battle alongside Him and one another by interceding, praising, discerning and declaring His will, and giving thanks to Him. Using worship as one of our spiritual weapons, we are guided by God's word, and His love is our ultimate guiding light.

Our desire is to further His kingdom and share God's love. We believe we can do this most effectively by taking time and asking God for His leading—first discerning, *then* declaring—His will in prayer and decision-making. We encourage our communities and committees to do this as well.

Global UME Family, thank you for being part of this beloved ministry through which God can change the world one marriage at a time!

The heart of the Prayer Committee is to rally prayer over our UME family members around the globe, encouraging and helping all of us *to connect with God and one another through prayer.*

We look forward to connecting with you more.

With much love,  
The Prayer Committee  
Darren & Rose Thurber, Dean & Paula Ellis, Paul & Joyce Ruddell

# TEAM RENEWAL 2024

## CALLING ALL TEAM COUPLES

Are you ready to make plans to attend Team Renewal 2024? TRC is cordially inviting all our AMAZING Teams and preparing Teams to this can't miss event. The following are a few ways we can connect:

- Connect to our lover
- Connect with Teams we haven't seen recently
- Connect with the new Weekend changes
- Connect with nature and the beautiful ocean front facility
- And finally and possibly the most important connection with our Father, Son and Holy Spirit

**When:** July 21-24, 2024

**Where:** St. Christopher Camp and Conference Center  
2810 Seabrook Island Road  
Johns Island, SC 29455

Watch for exciting updates in the following months, but in the meantime, here are some pictures from the site:



**MARK & CINDY MEINERT**

TRC CHAIRCOUPLE

# YOU'RE INVITED

Honoring Marriage - It's What We Do!

---

Join us for a United Marriage  
Encounter Weekend!

[www.unitedmarriage.com](http://www.unitedmarriage.com)



United Marriage Encounter®

2610 Park Ave  
Muscatine, IA 52761



✉ [info@unitedmarriage.com](mailto:info@unitedmarriage.com)

f [facebook.com/unitedmarriage](https://facebook.com/unitedmarriage)



CELEBRATION 2025 INFO