

A Truly "FAMIS" Community

by Don & Sue Basta

As part of the GREAT COMMUNITY SEARCH, the WWME Community Pillar salutes "Be-Encountering", a WWME sharing group community in Bolingbrook, IL. They have been meeting monthly since 1986. The contact couple is Don & Sue Basta scbasta@comcast.net.

F = Have FUN: This is a community that knows the meaning of FUN. They have yearly campouts for families, including married children and grandchildren. Once they spent the whole day trying to earn smiley face stickers by making someone smile, and then dialogued around the campfire on how we felt that day. Even the smallest children had feelings to express. They invite families from other communities and couples who have made a Weekend who aren't in a community. They have also started a tradition of sharing a meal on community night before the meeting; some couples come early for dinner and some come just for the meeting and share dessert with us afterwards. Sometimes they have "Secret Couples" who leave inspirational notes and small gifts on the doorstep - Cupid Couples in February and Firecracker Couples in July. They have Great Christmas Parties and special traditions... like the white elephant auction and Christmas ornament exchange (with a dialogue question attached) just to name a few. They try to make all their parties affordable so everyone can be included.

A = Are ACCOUNTABLE to one another: Each couple is expected to make a presentation at least once a year for one of our community meetings. They keep a decorated chart for volunteering to host or to write. Help is available with preparing and writing presentations. They call and email couples reminders about monthly meetings and other M.E. news and events. Periodically, they have a presentation on dialogue and issue a challenge within the community. One year the couple who dialogued the least was "gifted" with a Christmas tree (in February) decorated with lights and dialogue questions. The rule was that the lights had to remain on until the daily dialogue was done. The tree stayed in front of the house for a month. People who were not involved with Marriage Encounter began to call and say "dialogue already". All of our "help" is offered with love and a genuine desire to encourage and inspire toward daily dialogue and a more intimate sacramental relationship.

M = Embrace the MISSION: "Worldwide Marriage Encounter's mission of renewal in the Church and change in the world is to assist couples and priests to live fully intimate and responsible relationships by providing them with a Catholic experience and ongoing community support of such a lifestyle." They live this mission statement by making banners for the Weekend couples, providing prayer couples, and hosting the Weekend. The prayer couples go to the follow up meeting and offer to take their couple to their first community meeting. "Be-Encountering" is also actively involved in inviting. It is discussed at their monthly meetings. They have an inviting box full of all kinds of inviting tools, and they hold each other accountable for

taking one or two invitations and actually passing them out each month. They also plan pulpit talks and help hand out pamphlets at church. Almost all community members are active in church ministries like lecturing, distributing communion, running and doing Pre-Cana and RCIA to name a few. They are role models for each other and we have a strong system of community support. When a family has been in need, "Be-Encountering" has been known to pitch in and help whether it's a medical situation, loss of job, death in the family, or any major life event. They pull together as family to support the needs of the members as well as to others outside of community.

I = Fosters INTIMACY through dialogue and sharing of feelings: They encourage the intimacy for each couple as a necessary first step to fully participate in the larger community, the church, the diocese and finally the world. All are invited to share at community meetings to encourage intimacy within the community. They have dialogue challenges, like the one mentioned above, to encourage intimacy and growth. After the first community dialogue challenge, the participants had dinner together. They may joke about their intimate side, but they credit dialogue with increasing intimacy not only between spouses, but among the couples. The resulting unity is what makes them a strong community.

S = Includes SPIRITUALITY and Prayer in each meeting: The "Be-Encountering" sharing group has a prayer intention book. They list any needs of absent members in the book, and they pray together for the intentions listed there as well for intentions of those present at each meeting. As a community they pass along prayer requests between meetings and they put actions behind their prayers when any additional support is needed. They send regular updates out via email regarding people in need of prayers. They also pray the rosary for the intention of successful Weekends. The "Be-Encountering sharing group" believes it is important to thank God and to pray for continued blessings. Where two or more are gathering in His name, He is there in our midst. They are prayer warriors!



The “Be-Encountering” Sharing Group

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