



**June, 2011 Newsletter**  
**Better Life Counseling Center**

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*Counseling From a Christian Perspective*

**A Note from the Executive Director**

Wendy Cook



Dear Friends of BLCC,

Please join me in celebrating a successful event, a new opportunity, a new program and a milestone.

In the last newsletter I told you about a new annual community marriage workshop we launched in April that we hope will strengthen marriages in NEA. The *Love and Respect* video conference was a tremendous success. Our goal was to have 30 couples attend this inaugural event....we are thrilled that we had 60! This was an effort of several area churches, some generous host couples and the counseling center. I am excited to announce that on **March 9th and 10th 2012** we will be bringing Mr. Ted Cunningham and his **Love and Laughter** Conference to Jonesboro. Keep an eye out for registration information.

BLCC is pleased to be a part of a new publication, called *Life Goes On* that focuses on the unique lives of women age 50 and older. The premier issue will be out the first week of July and features a wonderful article by our board President, Rebecca Matthews. In addition, please check out the next page for an exciting announcement about a new community workshop BLCC will be offering beginning in 2012 thanks to the generosity of the United Way of Northeast Arkansas.

In closing, on behalf of the staff and board (both past and present)...THANK YOU! Better Life Counseling Center marked it's 15th year of service in May. Thanks to our church sponsors and so many generous community supporters, hundreds of our friends, family and neighbors have been helped, marriages saved, families mended and grief navigated. Please join us in celebration at an Open House on **Sunday, August 28th, 11am-1pm**. Come see our freshly painted offices and visit with our board and staff as we cast a vision for our next 15 years!

Thank you for supporting our work. I am always happy to hear from you as to how we can best serve your needs and expand and enhance our services. Please reach out to me at [wcook@betterlife.org](mailto:wcook@betterlife.org) or 870-935-4673.

Many Thanks,  
Wendy Cook

**Special thanks to our church partners**

Thank you to the churches who support the counseling center, we are able to continue our work because you believe in our mission.

Southwest Church of Christ Jonesboro, AR

Ash Flat Church of Christ

Westridge Church of Christ Pocahontas, AR

**Our Mission**

Helping Individuals and Families  
find a Better Life by strengthening families,  
nurturing parents and building marriages

**Our Vision**

To be the leader in providing marriage and family therapy  
using a Christian-based, family systems model



Summer 2011 has arrived which means wedding season is in full force. A time when friends and families gather to share in the announcement of exciting news. A time where mothers, daughters, and brides maids are filled with glee as they plan for the big day. A time when fathers may share in the excitement but secretly (or not so secretly) fret over how much money will be spent. And while engagement announcements and weddings are certainly a time for celebration, I invite you to consider some important questions to consider before you or someone you know says “I do.”

If the adage holds true--marriage is a marathon not a sprint, then weddings are the starting line of what we hope becomes a long journey shared between two lovers and friends. During the engagement and honeymoon phase couples share a sense of optimism that can last for several months or even a few years. Tragically, so many couples who start strong out of the gates never make it to the finish line together. In many cases a lack of adequate preparation is one of the major reasons for relational failure.

Modern marital research has given us some insight into what factors predict long-term relational success. Too often couples fall prey to the rose-colored glasses syndrome (RCG). When RCG sets in, individuals have a tendency to focus on the positive aspects of the relationship and likeable qualities his/her partner and avoid or overlook potential red flags. To overcome RCG it is important that couples explore the following kinds of questions before making any type of long-term commitment.

Do we seem to “fit” together well? A major aspect of relational compatibility includes the blending of personality types, presence of shared interests, and commonalities of life experience.

Have we adequately explored the similarities and/or differences in our family backgrounds? Individuals often carry the beliefs, values, and rituals from their family of origin into marriage. Couples need to talk about their experiences growing up and what expectations they have in regard to: relationship roles, decision making, parenting, relationship with extended family, finances, etc... .

Have we spent time talking about our core beliefs and values? This includes each person’s worldview and how that influences behavior and decision making. Also included here are the importance of personal faith and participation in organized religion.

Do we have an understanding of each person’s emotional health and maturity? This includes unresolved mental/emotional issues, communication and conflict resolution skills, ability to talk openly and honestly about “inner world.”

Do we have an understanding of how our former lives will impact our future? This includes financial obligations, work life, and other relationships. (This area is especially important to consider for those who are remarrying or becoming part of a step-family.)

Exploring the issues and questions above is part of what prepares a couple for the marathon of marriage. While unknown challenges and circumstances are sure to arise throughout the marital life-cycle, having a strong foundation built on trust, strength of character, and knowledge of our mate past and present are essential qualities for the life-long journey.

To all of you who have friends and family preparing for marriage I challenge you to think outside of the box when selecting a wedding gift and consider the gift of pre-marital counseling. I recommend meeting with a Christian therapist or minister who uses a pre-marital assessment program such as *Prepare-Enrich*. This research-based program includes an individual personality profile as well as assess relational dynamics including: communication and conflict resolution skills, family of origin, financial management, children & parenting and marriage expectations. May God continue bless all of your families and all of the families-to-be this year.

### **A special Thank you**

Better Life Counseling Center would like to thank the Jonesboro Ministerial Fellowship, specifically Jeff Chandler, John Miles, Sister Mary John Seyler, Bruce Tipett, and others who choose BLCC as a recipient of the Holy Week collection. Thanks to the generosity of those attending Holy Week services, BLCC received \$644 in funds to be used for our 2012 Community marriage conference.

# *Thank you Northeast Arkansas For 15 years of a Better Life!*

Your support has allowed us to help hundreds of friends and neighbors find a better life by strengthening families, nurturing parents and building marriages.

We look forward to serving you for many years to come,  
The staff and board of Better Life Counseling Center

*Please join us as we celebrate with an Open House  
on Sunday, August 28th 11am-1pm*

## Introducing..... ***It's Not My Fault***

BLCC is excited to announce a new community workshop we will be launching in January 2012 called *It's Not My Fault*. This will be a 6 month course for children in grades K-6th whose parents are separated or divorced.

The most recent numbers are staggering. Arkansas has the second highest divorce rate in the nation and NEA has the highest divorce rate in the state. Research shows us that the overwhelming majority of children of divorce feel sad, confused and angry. When these feelings are not expressed in a healthy way, they endure and confuse a child's view of themselves, of others and of relationships. How a child copes with divorce has far ranging implications and will be a major influence on their lives including the ability to forge and sustain a loving relationship and be a good parent themselves.

### **BLCC's Intended Outcomes:**

- ◆ Children will verbalize their feelings about the divorce, perhaps for the first time.
- ◆ Children will find their voice, can healthily express their feelings and understand that they are not at fault for the divorce.
- ◆ Children will gain a healthy perspective on relationships, will be less likely to turn to drugs and alcohol to deal with their emotions and their school performance will not suffer.

Courses will be lead by Lauren Orbison, BLCC staff and Licensed Clinical Social Worker and assisted by paid ASU social work or counseling students. The workshop will cover six topics: *I am not alone, What's happening to my family, It's not my fault, Why do I feel so sad, My changing family and Hope for the future.*

All participants will be followed for 6 months after the course ends via a monthly check-in email, resulting in 1 year of contact and support for each child.

Lauren specializes in school aged children with behavioral issues and is developing the "It's not my fault" curriculum.

This workshop will be made possible by the generous support of the United Way of Northeast Arkansas. In addition, the United Way will continue to fund our Parenting Separately classes. For more information, visit our website or give us a call. 870-935-4673



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## **Upcoming Events**

July 28th: Parenting Separately: 6-9pm; Craighead Co. Library, Round Room  
August 25th: Parenting Separately: 6-9pm; Craighead Co. Library, Round Room  
**August 28th: 15th Anniversary Open House; 11am-1pm @ BLCC**  
September 22nd: Parenting Separately: 6-9pm; Paragould Community Center

**October 8th: 2012 Harvest Hundred bike ride**  
[www.harvesthundred.com](http://www.harvesthundred.com)

**March 9th and 10th 2012: Love and Laughter**  
Community Marriage Conference  
featuring Ted Cunningham

\*All Parenting Separately classes are **FREE** and open to the public thanks to a grant from  
The United Way of NEA

***This is a free quarterly newsletter sent to Northeast Arkansas area churches, financial supporters of BLCC, and individuals who join the BLCC mailing list. If you would like to receive this newsletter by email, contact us at [mail@betterlife.org](mailto:mail@betterlife.org)***

**[www.betterlife.org](http://www.betterlife.org)**