

## Redefining Parenthood

Recently, I found myself awake in the middle of the night trying to console my sixth month-old son. As a father of five, I'd spent many sleepless nights with our children - but this night was different. My wife was in the hospital recovering from surgery and I was on my own!



As I tried to calm our baby, I kept asking myself - What would my wife Kelle do? After much prayer, singing and rocking, he finally fell back to sleep. It was a very personal reminder of a powerful truth - every child needs a mom and a dad. As hard as I tried to comfort my infant son, the thing he needed most at that moment was the loving touch of his mother.

When I consider the family policy debates raging today, they often come down to some very basic questions. Are

men and women different? Do we parent differently? Is married parenting still the preferred environment for raising children? Believe it or not, many would answer "no" to all of the above. This philosophy - that gender and marriage are irrelevant - is a key tenant of those seeking to redefine marriage, the family and parenthood.

Sadly, growing numbers of children are being raised in homes without a married mom and dad. There are nearly 47,000 Michigan children born out of wedlock each year. In addition, over 18,000 kids are in our foster system, including over 4,500 who currently await adoptive families. How will we respond? Will we change our laws to accommodate the growing number of alternative family forms? Or will we continue to stand for God's design for marriage? The bottom line is this - we

can compassionately care for the motherless and fatherless children among us (James 1:27) without redefining parenthood!

Marriage is still the most pro-child institution we have because marriage, more than any other relationship, gives children the best chance to succeed in life. We must hold fast to the presumption that married parenting is best for children and advocate for laws that affirm this principle. If we do, we will be sending an honest, clear message to the next generation.

Will you partner with us in this effort? We need your prayers, financial support and involvement to sustain our initiatives this summer.

Thanks for standing with us!

*Brad Snavelly*

Brad Snavelly  
Executive Director



Packed with research and helpful information, MFF's Family Resource Guides are valuable tools in addressing marriage and family issues. Check out these and other resources on our website, [www.michiganfamily.org](http://www.michiganfamily.org), or order a copy on the enclosed card.

MICHIGAN ADOPTION RESOURCE GUIDE

PROMOTING FATHERHOOD IN MICHIGAN

SEX EDUCATION: Rights and Responsibilities in Michigan Law

## Welcome, Nate!



MFF is pleased to welcome Nate Knapper, our summer intern. Nate is a Senior at Calvin

College, majoring in Political Science and Communications. He recently won three prestigious awards for his work as an intern in the Michigan Legislature.

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## Lawmakers Hear from Elizabeth Marquardt

Noted Author and Researcher Calls For a "Time-Out" in Redefining Parenthood

Michigan Family Forum was pleased to host a legislative luncheon in March with author and researcher Elizabeth Marquardt. Several lawmakers and staff were in attendance to hear Ms. Marquardt speak on the topic of "The Revolution in Parenthood: The emerging clash between adult rights and children's needs."

Elizabeth Marquardt is the author of "Between Two Worlds: The Inner Lives of Children of Divorce." She has been a guest on several national news programs including World News Tonight, the Today Show, the O'Reilly Factor and All Things Considered. Her writings have also been published in the New York Times, Washington Post, Los Angeles Times, Chicago Tribune, and more. She is currently the Vice

President of the Center for Marriage and Family at the Institute for American Values.

"This luncheon was an excellent opportunity for Michigan lawmakers to hear from an expert in the field of family studies," said MFF Executive Director Brad Snavelly. "Elizabeth Marquardt is one of the leading voices today within the marriage movement. Her research and writings are part of a growing body of research showing that marriage and family structure are key components of a stable society."

Marquardt's speech focused on problems our society faces

when the rights of adults clash with the needs of children.

She also discussed recent public policy trends and how adult decisions are likely to impact the well-being of children.



Elizabeth Marquardt

Marquardt asserts, "The well-being of the world's children calls us to act - not years from now, but

right now. For their sake, for those born and those yet to be born, we must be willing to launch a sometimes-uncomfortable but urgent debate about the well-being of children born in an age that is rapidly redefining the meaning of parenthood. Nothing is inevitable. The time to act is now."

## New Publication Available from MFF



Redefining Parenthood: Adult Rights Versus Children's Needs is a compelling publication based on Elizabeth Marquardt's ground-breaking report. Marquardt discusses new trends in alternative parenthood, the slippery slope created by changing the definition of parenthood, and how policy-makers need to take a time-out and evaluate the consequences of

this movement. To order this informative report, refer to the enclosed response card. It can also be viewed in its entirety at our website, [www.michiganfamily.org](http://www.michiganfamily.org).

## 2007 Top Priorities

- Adoption/Orphan Care Initiative
- Parental Rights Legislation
- Healthy Marriage Initiative
- Responsible Fatherhood Project
- Choose Freedom Abstinence Initiative

## MFF needs your support

Michigan Family Forum is a 501c3 organization funded by donations from involved, caring people like you. If you can help financially support MFF's efforts to strengthen families in Michigan, please return the enclosed donation card with your contribution or give us a call at (800) 644-9111.

MFF also offers an on-line giving option. Visit [www.michiganfamily.org](http://www.michiganfamily.org) and click on the MasterCard/Visa logo.

"For the first time in Michigan history, the legislature will be working to create unmarried families, rather than working to discourage unmarried households. Scientific evidence clearly shows that marriage is vital to the best interests of the child...We oppose this legislation because it will create a very unusual legal relationship where two adults are legally tied to a child but have no legal relationship to each other. We do not believe that a permanent union joining a child and two adults who do not have a legal commitment to each other is the best way to meet the financial or health care needs of our children."

*MFF's Dan Jarvis, excerpted from a letter to Michigan Legislators.*

## THE FORUM

THE FORUM is published by Michigan Family Forum. MFF is a private, non-profit research and education organization dedicated to strengthening families in Michigan through sound public policies.

If you would like more information about Michigan Family Forum, or if you know of other people who would like a free subscription to THE FORUM, please call our office or visit our website.

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## House Considers Unmarried Couple Adoption

The Michigan House Judiciary Committee recently voted to send HB 5249, a bill to permit unmarried adults to adopt, to the full House for consideration. The adoptive "parents" could be a same-sex or opposite-sex couple, or any two adults.

Michigan Family Forum submitted written testimony in opposition to the bill. "Pas-

sage of this bill would be a big step toward redefining the family," said MFF Executive Director Brad Snavely. "There is plenty of evidence indicating that children raised outside of a married home face significant challenges both now and later in life. The state's policy should encourage married couple parenting whenever possible - including the adoption process."

## Parental Rights Upheld in New HPV Legislation

Senators Tony Stamas (R-Midland) and Deb Cherry (D-Burton) introduced legislation that will provide information for parents about the human papilloma virus (HPV) and vaccine. The bills will require the state Department of Education to post information about HPV on its website, to provide information and materials to schools for distribution to parents and/or students, and require schools to inform parents about HPV and the HPV vaccine when providing information about other vaccinations.



Sen. Tony Stamas

The bills do not contain any language mandating vaccination of children against HPV. Sponsors in the Senate acknowledged that the bills were a compromise because of "concern expressed by senators and by the public"

over a previous set of bills that would have mandated vaccination for sixth-grade girls.

Michigan Family Forum was the key organization pushing for a more parent-friendly approach to this controversial issue, alerting lawmakers and parents about concerns with the original legislation. While not being opposed to the vaccine itself, MFF opposed mandatory vaccinations on the grounds that parents should be the ones to decide whether their child should receive a vaccine against a sexually-transmitted disease.

"The introduction of these bills is a victory for parental rights," said MFF Executive Director Brad Snavely. "Parents will now be armed with the information needed for them to decide if the vaccine is in the best interest of their child without state coercion."

The bills passed unanimously in the Senate and now await action in the House.

## Michigan Supreme Court to hear Marriage Amendment Case State's Highest Court Will Have Final Say on Same-sex Partner Benefits

On the heels of a February Michigan Court of Appeals decision prohibiting public employers from offering benefits to same-sex domestic partners, the Michigan Supreme Court recently announced it will hear the case. The case affects state and city employees, as well as those employed at universities or other taxpayer-funded organizations.

The suit was first brought by a group of City of Kalamazoo employees. After passage of Michigan's Marriage Amendment (MMA), Attorney General Mike Cox issued an

opinion stating Kalamazoo's policies of offering benefits to the same-sex partners of its employees violated the amendment.

The ACLU filed suit on behalf of the City of Kalamazoo workers and some state and university employees. Ingham County Circuit Court Judge Joyce Dragenchuk ruled in their favor. The ruling by the Appeals Court overturned that judgment. Benefits to same-sex couples remain banned pending the Supreme Court decision.

## Marriage Education Programs Draw Ministry/Community Leaders

Over the past several months, MFF has coordinated three training programs for marriage educators and counselors sponsored by the Michigan Healthy Marriage Coalition. The conferences proved to be very popular, with attendance figures well above what was anticipated.



PREP Training in Plymouth, MI

The three programs offered were:

- "P.I.C.K. -a-Partner" – a comprehensive pre-marital education program designed to assist individuals in finding a compatible partner, and to train couples in how to main-

tain compatibility and harmony once they are married.

- "Smart Steps for Stepfamilies" – a program on how to have a successful marriage in light of the unique characteristics of step-family relationships.
- "PREP" Marriage Enhancement – a leading national program in preparing couples for a healthy, lifelong marriage.

Michigan Family Forum will be hosting more of these free

events as well as offering several publications on behalf of the Michigan Healthy Marriage Coalition.

## MFF Launches Adoption Initiative

Promoting adoption is an important way to ensure that more children get what they need - the love and support of a mother and a father. Michigan has an especially large number of children in need of an adoptive family. Our foster care system is overwhelmed, with over 18,000 kids, including over 6,000 who have no legal parent and more than 4,500 children who are waiting to be placed in an adoptive home.

This summer, MFF is planning an initiative in cooperation with Bethany Christian Services and other adoption agencies, to address this persistent problem. Our foster care crisis provides an opportunity for the church to fulfill the calling in James 1:27. As churches respond to the need, we believe many of these children will find loving homes. If you are interested in promoting this initiative in your church, see the enclosed response card.

## Legislative Agenda Unveiled at Legislative Reception

Michigan Family Forum hosted lawmakers from across the state at a breakfast reception on February 8 in Lansing. More than 60 legislators or legislative staff attended and received copies of "Putting Families First: Twenty-Two Policy Recommendations to Strengthen Michigan Families."

Michigan Family Forum releases legislative recommendations every two years related to our key areas of focus: Strengthening



Executive Director Brad Snavely with Rep. Dave Hildebrand and Rep. Bill Caul

"We're excited about our agenda for the new legislative session," said MFF's Brad Snavely.

"We've added several new recommendations to those that we have advocated for in previous sessions."

Marriage and Families, Encouraging Fatherhood, Protecting Children, and Honoring Elders. The legislative reception provides an opportunity for MFF to share our priorities and to network with lawmakers who may potentially sponsor legislation impacting the family.

The agenda is available in its entirety at our website, [www.michiganfamily.org](http://www.michiganfamily.org)



MFF is excited to host our fourth Blackstone Fellow this summer.



Joshua Cools is a graduate of Hillsdale College, and is currently a student at Ave Maria School of Law. Joshua will be doing legal research for Michigan Family Forum in the months of June and July.

The Blackstone Legal Fellowship is a nine-week leadership development program established by the Alliance Defense Fund. The students are equipped with the tools necessary to begin the critical process of restoring our legal system to the principles on which it was built.

## Hear and Be Heard!



The FORUM ONLINE weekly email gives you a brief update on family-related issues.



The FORUM FLASH special alerts keep you informed on the latest legislative issues and gives you a quick and easy way to contact your local leaders.

To participate in these informative services, register in the Action Center on our website. Your information is confidential and will not be sold or distributed to outside parties.

[www.michiganfamily.org](http://www.michiganfamily.org)