

Do you want to be a Heritage Keeper®?

Heritage Keepers® considers couples who are sincerely interested in establishing a healthy family and are:

- at least 18 years old
- romantically involved, cohabiting or married
- already parents and/or expecting a child
- desire to form a healthy marriage and family

Couples will be screened and selected according to the project's criteria.

Couples will be nurtured and mentored by caring staff. Therefore, enrollment is limited to ensure optimal success.

Heritage Keepers® accepts referrals from faith and community based agencies such as:

- Department of Social Services
- DHEC Clinics
- DJJ and Correctional Facilities
- Faith Community
- Family Court
- Fatherhood Initiatives
- Foster Care Review Boards
- Lowcountry Crisis Pregnancy Center
- Prenatal Clinics
- Trident One Stop
- School Guidance Counselors
- School Principals
- WIC

*Federal funding for this Healthy Marriage Initiative provided by the Administration for Children and Families, Child Welfare Bureau. **Heritage Keepers®** is a four year demonstration project designed to improve child well-being by understanding and removing barriers to and strengthening family formation and healthy marriages.*



Founded in 1995, Heritage Community Services' programs utilize The Heritage MethodSM, a logic model that addresses the risky behavior of adolescents from the perspective of changing the behavior that is causing the problem rather than dealing with the consequences of the risky actions. Our goal is to increase the knowledge, skills and commitment related to the formation of stable, healthy families.

Heritage Keepers® HMI
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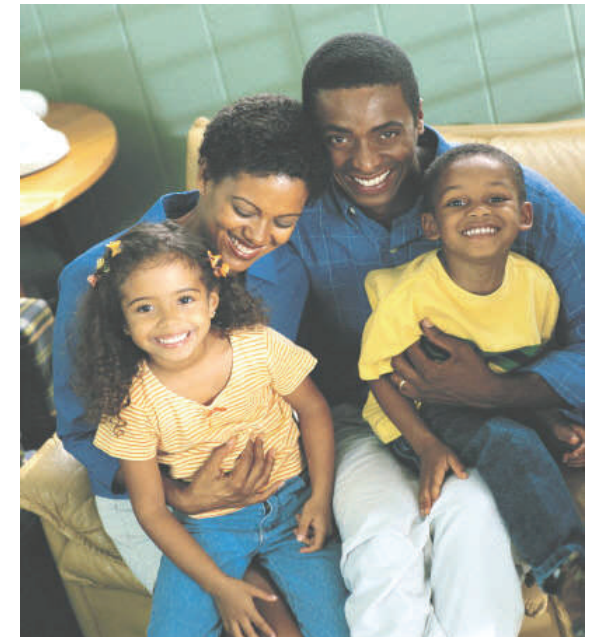
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Over 70% of children from Charleston's fragile families will spend part, if not all, of their childhood in foster care.

Heritage Keepers® Healthy Marriage Initiative

is an early intervention for couples who dream of having a healthy marriage, a stable family life and happy, successful children.



Why do we need Heritage Keepers® Healthy Marriage Initiative?

Many children in South Carolina are born to single parents and end up in poverty that lasts a lifetime.

- In some instances, the parents of these children live together in an uncommitted cohabiting relationship.
- In others, the mother and father have a close relationship but the father lives apart.
- In still other cases, the father has little or no contact with either his child or his child's mother.

Look no further... than our own communities to see the results of chaotic family formation and appreciate the need for changing attitudes about healthy marriage and learning the skills needed for a stable family.

- **43%** of **Charleston** vs. 40% of all SC babies are born out-of-wedlock;
- **47%** of **Charleston** vs. 40% of SC's children in single-parent families live in poverty.
- **71%** of **Charleston's** foster children are African-American, **25%** Caucasian, and **4%** of other races;
- **20%** of a foster child's life in **Charleston** is spent in out of home placement;
- **50%** of **Charleston's** foster children leave the system without permanent placement.

*SC Kids Count,
SC Statistical Abstract,
SC Foster Kids Count*

Marriage Matters for Families

Divorced or unwed childbearing increases:

- poverty for both children and mothers.
- the likelihood that children will themselves divorce or become unwed parents.
- children's risk of school failure.
- rates of psychological distress and mental illness.
- significantly the risk of suicide.
- significantly the risk of boys engaging in delinquent and criminal behavior.
- the risk of child abuse.

Children raised by their own two parents within marriage increases:

- the likelihood that parents have good relationships with their children.
- the economical benefits to minorities.
- on average, the health benefits, than for children in other family forms.
- health benefits among minorities and the poor.
- the chances of seeing reduced rates of alcohol or substance for both adults and teens.

*Why Marriage Matters; Twenty-Six Conclusions from the Social Sciences
(Second Edition 2005)*

While many unmarried parents want to build a future together, they encounter barriers that discourage them from doing so. They lack role models from which they could learn about commitment, conflict resolution, financial independence and constructive strategies for handling the differences, issues and stresses presented in everyday life.

Heritage Keepers® HMI wants to identify what is lacking for these couples so they can be empowered to provide the best possible future for themselves and their children.

What is Heritage Keepers® Healthy Marriage Initiative (HMI)?

- A four year demonstration project that seeks to identify barriers to healthy family formation, and provide education and support services to couples trying to raise a child together.
- The goal is to find out what works in preventing children from ending up in foster care by working with their parents.

What services does Heritage Keepers® HMI provide?

Dedicated male and female Family Coordinators trained to:

- Assess family needs
- Identify and remove barriers, if possible
- Make referrals to other appropriate services
- Set flexible appointment times including office and home visits
- Provide long term encouragement and emotional support
- Provide incentives for completion of sessions

What Heritage Keepers® HMI teaches us?

FREE education and life skills sessions will cover topics such as:

- Communication/Conflict Resolution
- Parenting Children and Adolescents
- Importance of Mom **AND** Dad
- Sexuality, Fidelity and Commitment
- Benefits of Marriage vs. Cohabitation
- Making of a Man and a Woman
- Career Coaching
- Building Wealth