

**Educating for Strong Families and a Strong Society**  
London Regional Congress  
**World Congress of Families**

Baden Powell House  
June 2-5, 2010

Christine de Marcellus Vollmer  
**President, Alliance for the Family**

# Educating for Strong Families and a Strong Society

London Regional Congress  
World Congress of Families

Baden Powell House  
June 2-5, 2010

Christine de Marcellus Vollmer  
**President, Alliance for the Family**

Good afternoon. First of all I would like to thank Vanessa Theed for organizing this very interesting and important meeting.

This programme, and the wonderful speakers you have attracted for these two days, have covered topics of vital interest concerning the family. First the view of the faith side, important because faith and families have always gone together. Where one disappears, the other follows almost immediately. Then we heard about some of the great threats to the family...and to faith...and now in this last afternoon some very important and practical steps that need to be taken if we are to save our families and our civilization.

I am particularly appreciative of being asked to join those who are speaking about strengthening the family. After John Smeaton's description of what has been being put into schools...one can only presume with the intent to destroy marriage and the family.....we need to look for every possible way to strengthen family bonds of all kinds, and to *re-learn the skills of family life*.

Learning to live together is something which is taught, learned, imitated and it is no accident, nor is a happy marriage and a happy family simply luck. It is learnt and practiced. It, like anything of worth, *costs* something. Love, the basis of the happy family, the happy marriage, is not "free". Although it is freely given, it does cost. The cost is measured in many small, or larger, sacrifices of self.

The great Viktor Frankl, neurologist and definitive psychiatrist, was able to explain the reason why love is contingent upon the emptying, or more precisely, subordination of self. He explained in his famous work, *Man's Search for Meaning*, how happiness, fulfillment, satisfaction is, and can only be, the by-product of the forgetting of self. In his explanation of neurological and psychiatric science, he explained the mechanics of this and in fact explained the Christian message. If we forget ourselves in the service of something outside and greater than ourselves, we will in fact be joyful... feel happy. It is when we are selfish that we feel dissatisfied and the desire to have and to be *more*, leaves us feeling empty.

Now, this learning to be beyond ourselves in self-gift does not come automatically. It is a discipline learnt from childhood. In former times the very difficulties of survival helped in that learning. The family unit had of necessity to work and sacrifice for one another. But in our day, convenience and increased comfort have made that learning more and more difficult. Television and advertising are pushing us to want more and more and are telling us that we must indulge ourselves and not to sacrifice.

And so we have produced, particularly since the 1960's, these increasingly "me" generations, who now do not even know that anything else exists. As John Smeaton has explained, the Sex Education industry has, for Financial, Eugenic and political reasons, gone a long way towards totally destroying morals, faith and family. The victims of this trend are of course the children, and the adults they become, who cannot find happiness or stability.

I don't know if this audience thinks I am painting a picture of many parts of English society. In fact I am describing the situation in every country I know. When I married in Latin America in 1961, I married into a world of stable marriages and large families. That has pretty well disappeared as early cohabitation, the 2-child family and easy divorce have taken their place. Families are falling apart; even the concept is now very blurred, although everyone envies a strong family when they see one!

In fact, as I raised my family and saw what was happening around me...the fruits of what John Smeaton has described....I was horrified. I was seeing the incipient destruction of families and of the values on which they are built. When my children were all old enough to go to school, I became involved with the whole complex of subjects which has been the study of these 2 days.

As we saw the forces arrayed against us, PROVIVE, the association a bunch of us had put together, decided one year to do the Stanford Research Institute Strategic Planning sessions that all the big businesses were doing. To our surprise, at the end of the weeks of this deep analysis, we discovered that we had defined that our first goal had to be to stop Sex Education.

Now, we all know that Planned Parenthood and the enormous industries which live off it and finance it in such an efficient and evil synergy, cannot simply be stopped, any more than a speeding train can be stopped by walking out in front of it. So quite simply we decided we had to develop something so much more true, so much more attractive, so much more complete, that everyone would prefer it. By and large, people recognize the superior article!

We started by *defining* Sex Education, to understand what was needed. After some brain storming sessions we came up with "Sex Ed is everything a person must learn, from birth, in order to be capable of living happily and forever with their chosen spouse." Of course living with anyone for decades, happy and harmoniously requires quite a number of virtues and skills. Patience, loyalty, perseverance, justice and

consideration come quickly to mind. Knowing how to listen and how to express oneself, also, and a host of others too, when you start to think about it.

And so we listed these 100 or so things that must be learned, and then put them in the order of ages at which they are best learnt. These were assigned to the 12 years of school, from 6 to 18. Each year was allotted 35 lessons, in order to give one hour per week.

All of this was a wild adventure that took us from anthropology to psychology to neurology for starters. It was long, hard work, but well worth it. Combining the findings of the latest in brain development, (in order to approach the subjects at the best age) with the wisdom of Frankl was truly inspiring.

Once the base was laid, with objectives for each of those successive chapters, 35 times 12, which is 420, I think, we began to write a story which would express through the lives of normal, everyday, children and young people, these objectives. The situations are universal human conditions, which is why we describe this programme as *anthropologically based*. Then it was time to give it a title and we chose *Alive to the World*. Louise Kirk has spoken to you about it.

*Alive to the World* transmits universal values in a non-religious fashion although it is one hundred percent in line with Christian teachings. So it is also appropriate for multicultural groups, as these universal values and virtues are acceptable to Muslims and Jews. Our desire is to get it into all schools, including state schools as a harmonizing influence for the Global reality.

*Alive to the World* is not intended to replace Religious Education, but to prepare 'fertile ground' where the seeds of the Word of God can land.

**Alliance for the Family / AFF** is dedicated to being truly effective and for this reason our program starts at Grade 1 with six-year olds, and continues until graduation from 12th grade. In this way we can form young men and women of character who will break the vicious cycles we see so often and establish stable and happy families that will work to make their communities peaceful and prosperous.

We focus on how to transmit the universal values such as loyalty, perseverance, generosity, self-sacrifice, responsibility, teamwork, and keeping one's word. We have found the program is quite quickly effective because these values are inscribed in every heart, and are adopted with joy when understood.

*Alive to the World* uses a story-based approach that captivates the pupils as a continuous story unfolds about a group of kids of the age of each grade level, addressing the developmental and existential situations of that psychological level.

As each grade level consists of an attractive text book for the student and a Teacher's Manual, the kids enjoy reading the story. As their story progresses, our

students begin to understand the logic of reciprocity and how to live these universal values while the teacher is enabled to focus on helping them understand how happiness and prosperity are linked to certain norms of behavior, and what they can do about it in their own lives.

Our pedagogy is directed to "the head, the heart and the hand" as Thomas Lickona describes the process of instructing the intelligence and the will, appealing to the emotions for each objective, and indicating appropriate behavior. The Golden Rule undergirds our reasoning, and humility, rather than pride, is shown to be the winner's formula.

*Alive to the World* is eminently participative. Part of our job is to train teachers to foster constructive classroom discussion, sometimes a novelty in developing countries.

Our main thrust is to help young people to think intelligently about choices and consequences. At age-appropriate levels, they have to consider family, friendship, peer pressure, romance, sex, love, marriage—and implications like loyalty, patience, perseverance, team work, personal responsibility, respect for others and their property, commitment, and fidelity, to name but a few. Over time, they learn that virtues make sense, that they form a coherent system, and that they open up a world of possibilities of health, happiness, and progress

As the young people read episodes that they can identify with—for example, a homeless person asks them for help, or there's alcohol at a party—they have to reflect and talk about what they would do in the same situation. We are finding that the program is very popular in the poorest sectors, urban and rural, as somehow they are finding models and patterns of logic where these are seriously lacking in the inner city, especially where there are immigrants and mixed cultures. In middle class schools it is also very well received as so much of the story turns on sports and friendship.

Even though the final volumes of the Spanish-language series did not appear until 2005, currently 65,000 young people in 11 Latin American countries are enrolled in the program.

The universal values and virtues contained in this program really *are* universal, we have found. The African Federation of Family Action, comprising 10 countries, asked if they could do an adaptation for Africa. After deep study in those countries and consultation and adaptation, we found that the adaptations were practically nothing! Some sports were changed and the tone of the dialogues between parents and children. All we had to do was re-illustrate! It is now print ready, as we seek funding for it. A Brazilian version is in preparation.

In cooperation with the John Templeton Foundation, we have begun to assess the program's impact on 8,000 young people in Mexico, Peru, and Venezuela. Three annual evaluations focus on attitudes that are--- stated in a simplified fashion--- democratic. In conjunction with this effort, we have pioneered the technologies for children and teachers

to report their impressions of the the programme via the internet and, in remote areas, via touch-tone phones.

The Graduate School of Public Policy of the **College of William and Mary** in the USA, has done an independent study of 8,000 of these students that so far has found “strong initial evidence” that *Alive to the World* transmits what they call “democratic values” to children: fair play, teamwork, personal responsibility, and involvement with the local community, as well as respect for others’ opinions, the fundamental equality of all, and for the differences that make each of us unique.

There is a lot more in the program, particularly about attraction, romance and marriage preparation, which all find their place once the virtues are well understood. Needless to say, it’s age-appropriate.

And so we are appealing to foundations everywhere to make this something that will really make a difference. Not just one more programme. We are looking to unite many, many talents and groups.

With assistance from the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation, we have created InfoVal, [www.InfoVal.org](http://www.InfoVal.org), the internet’s only portal specializing in how to transmit universal values and virtues. On this participative website, experts and institutions share their insights and experiences among themselves and with the public. InfoVal is also the resource center for our Virtual Education Center /VEC, which will offer on-line courses for teachers, starting later this year.

VEC’s Course One will train teachers in the theory and practice of transmitting values and virtues via *Alive to the World*: hundreds of new teachers take up the program each year. Eventually, we will produce other online courses for teachers, parents, and young people and will allow other organizations to use VEC for their own courses. Aside from a sophisticated platform, we have the requisite academic and management know-how, as well as cooperative agreements with RITLA, ISTEAC, and a growing list of universities.

We totally convinced that strengthening families, strengthening nations, saving children and young people and *saving our civilization* depends upon teaching the basic and universal values. We are also convinced that we cannot teach religion without this base. If all is relative and self centered, eroticized and disconnected, how can we possibly teach the transcendent? We invite you all to join this huge, common effort.

Please see [www.allianceforfamily.org](http://www.allianceforfamily.org) for details and general information