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07/17/07

Free program offered

The Jewish Family and Children's Service is offering a free program for new and expectant parents to promote a healthy relationship for their children.

NORTH PORT-- Free classes are being offered for new and expectant parents in North Port.

The Jewish Family & Children's Service, JFCS, is looking for couples to participate in Healthy Families/Healthy Children Program to help mothers and fathers strengthen their relationship and parenting skills.

"I am currently teaching couples at the South County Resource Offices near Manatee Community College, but when I get enough couples in North Port, we already have two locations where we can hold classes. One is off Pan American Boulevard and we have another space available at Tri-County Counseling Center," said JFCS Family Coordinator B.J. Moore.

The program is geared toward couples who are at least 18 years old, unwed and expectant or new parents of a baby 3 months of age or younger.

"Healthy Families/Healthy Children is a specially designed program where each class builds on one another," Moore said. "We deal with problem solving issues and conflict management."

According to the Jewish Family and Children's Service Web site, www.jfcs-cares.org, the couples participate in the nationally recognized "Love's Cradle," educational and support group classes which focus on skills to raise a healthy and successful child through improved parenting skills. They also discover ways to renew intimacy and enhance mutual respect, strengthen love, commitment and friendship and learn how to handle finances together.

"The couples don't have to live together either, they just have to be committed to strengthening their relationship and improving their parenting skills" Moore said. "We also offer so many other services as well for the couples including child care and free baby sitting for infants while their parents attend groups. There is free help with transportation to group classes, alumni support for program graduates and free booster sessions for graduates to practice or learn new skills too."

Moore has been working with families for 25 years and does all the teaching for couples in the Venice and North Port areas. She hopes to have three or four couples

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for the new group.

"The classes are very individualized. The couples work things out amongst themselves rather than working their conflicts out in front of the group. Many of the couples that graduated have really benefited from the program, and they know that they can always come back to talk to us or attend the free booster sessions," Moore said.


The classes take place every Thursday from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. and are held for nine weeks with the tenth week being the graduation. Depending on how many couples Moore gets from North Port, the meetings will be held at the most convenient location, either at the South County Resource Center or at one of the two North Port locations.

JFCS offers services throughout Sarasota and Manatee counties.

For questions or information about Healthy Families/Healthy Children in South Sarasota, call B.J. Moore at 941-284-2987 or the main campus at 941-366-1000 for services in other areas.

ERIKA CAPEK

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