

Bob and Maree Gaupter Nurtures Parents' Day Organization

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From left to right: Bob and Maree Gaupter and their four children In Mee, Una, Orrin, and Aidan.

Unificationists Bob and Maree Gaupter, who have been hosting annual Parents' Day events in Wheatland, California since 2006, are creating a stir with their calls for strong marriages and good parenting among families in the local community.

The Gaupter's joined the Unification Church in the late 1970s and were Blessed in marriage in 1982 at Madison Square Garden by Unification Church Founders Rev. and Mrs. Sun Myung Moon. They are proud parents of four children: In Mee, 24, Una, 22, Orrin, 19, and Aidan, 13. An outdoors enthusiast, Mr. Gaupter enjoys organizing boating-, camping-, and fishing activities for Unificationist families and young adults during the summer. Mrs. Gaupter, who is the Sacramento representative for the Blessed Family Ministry, a marriage-counseling network for Lovin' Life Ministries (LLM), is a trained Matching Advisor for Unificationists seeking to get married. In addition, she has founded a Women's Federation for World Peace (WFWP) chapter in Wheatland and through the organization, hosted a kick-off event earlier this year in the form of a fundraiser for tsunami victims in Japan (see link).



Mary Capps (far right) and Maree Gaupter introduce Chris and Aimee Zarges and their children.

Three Sundays a month, the Gaupter's attend Grace Episcopal Church in Wheatland, where Mrs. Gaupter is the church organist. The remaining Sundays, they attend the Sacramento Valley Unification Church (SVUC) for the live broadcast of LLM Sunday Service. The LLM community in Sacramento consists of approximately 50 adults and 30 children.

The inspiration to organize their first Parents' Day event in 2006 came from fellow Unificationist Bento Leal, who is a graduate of the Unification Theological Seminary (UTS) and founded the Parents' Day Council of Northern California.

"The impetus to do our own event came from the outstanding families we had come to know, here in our home town area," said Mr. Gaupter. "We chose four families and honored them with an 'Excellence in Parenting' award, and a local congressman, Wally Herger, agreed to be the keynote speaker."

The first Parents' Day event was held at the local middle school in Wheatland, and every year after that, at a local building called Pioneer Memorial Hall (PMH), which is owned by Grace Church.

"Since I am the organist at Grace Church, we can use the PMH in return for a free-will donation," said Mrs. Gaupter. "This helps keep our costs, which are usually \$300-\$500, down. The first few years, this money came out of our pockets and that of local families, but more recently, we have been getting sponsorship from the SVUC."

Marriage Minutes

By Bob Gauper (Thanks Bob)

On Sunday, July 1, a reporter from the Appeal-Democrat spent three hours interviewing my wife and me; the occasion - our thirty year wedding anniversary.



As many readers of this column know, my wife and I were married, along with 2,074 other couples, in 1982 at Madison Square Garden in New York City. To celebrate the thirty-year anniversary of this milestone, many celebratory events took place throughout America and the world. The biggest event was a gala at The Manhattan Center which included dining, dancing, testimo-

nies, and entertainment performed by the children of these couples.

My wife and I, and over thirty wedding alumni from Northern California and Nevada, celebrated our anniversary at an historic Italian restaurant in Oakland. One of highlights of the evening was a comedy routine by alumnus Bento Leal (who happens to have relatives in Rio Oso). Several of the attendees gave testimonies about their experiences of the past thirty years. Some were quite heart-wrenching, because, well, life is difficult. Raising a family is difficult. But through it all, these couples stayed together.

Every couple that was married on that hot and muggy July afternoon in downtown Manhattan had their photo taken in front of a banner that read: "World Peace through Ideal Families", a lofty goal indeed.

Commenting about ideal families, Reverend In Jin Moon has suggested that the words "I" and "deal" should have been separated. It should have read, "I-deal families" -- I deal with life's problems; I don't run away from the difficulties. Good advice for couples that have been married for thirty years or just getting started.

Bob Gauper's column in The Wheatland Citizen, called Marriage Minutes, featured his Marriage-Blessing photo with Maree Gauper in its August 2012 issue.

The Wheatland Citizen and Marriage Minutes

Among the couples who were honored for the Gauper's first Parents' Day event were Cory Bartholomew, a Major in the U.S. Air Force, and his wife Johnna, neighbors of the Gaupers.

"We became their friends after I became their daughter's piano teacher in 2001," said Mrs. Gauper. "They used to be Mormons but have left the Mormon Church and are a little skeptical about organized religion. However, they are people who live by conscience, and they are also very passionate Libertarians. They believe in marriage, family, community and responsible citizenship."



Rick Givens from the Lions Club, an international service program, introduces Jay and Becky Pendergraph, recipients of the Excellence in Parenting award in the Gauper's Parents' Day event in 2011.

Together with their three children, the Bartholomew couple runs a community newspaper called The Wheatland Citizen, which prints 3,500 copies per month.

"They were so inspired by our Parents' Day initiative that they invited us out to dinner to ask how they could support us in the future, to keep it going as a tradition," said Mr. Gauper. "So from that dinner meeting, the Wheatland Parents' Day Council was born, and together we have celebrated Parents' day annually ever since, with some financial support from Grace Church, SVUC, and The Wheatland Citizen. We hope to expand it as time goes by, and we also hope that other towns, churches, and organizations will get inspired to have their own Parents' Day traditions."

In 2007, the Gauper's joined a marriage educators' coalition, and after attending several trainings and facilitating a few local marriage-education events, Mr. Gauper found the inspiration to secure a monthly column on the topic in The Wheatland Citizen he called "Marriage Minutes."

“We continually get excellent feedback about Marriage Minutes,” said Mrs. Gauper. “Some people say it’s the first thing they look for when they open the paper! Even the general’s wife at our local Air Force Base complimented Bob about Marriage Minutes and how much she enjoys it!”



Bill Jens, a marriage educator, was a guest speaker at the Gauper's Parents' Day event in 2011.

Publicizing Parents' Day Events

In terms of further publication of their events to support the outreach efforts of LLM, the Gauper's are well aware that resistance is to be expected.

“We have yet to break through with bigger papers,” said Mrs. Gauper. “Sometimes it seems as if the major daily paper for our area, the Appeal Democrat, based in Marysville, may have some prejudice toward our church. I could never even get them to cover my piano recitals. Recently we did get a reporter from the Appeal Democrat to come to our house to talk about our wedding anniversary. She came, brought photographers, and stayed for three hours, but the paper hasn't run her story. It's been almost two months now.

“We're definitely building interest from the Wheatland community at a grassroots level, however. For example, some years, all the nominations come from the community, not the committee. Local pastors and the Lions' Club, an international service organization, sent in nominations, and so did private citizens. Each year, award recipients ask if they can help out with the event in the future.”

The Gauper's are confident that they will reap greater successes on behalf of the Unification Church if they continue to invest into local families and events.

“We love Lovin' Life Ministries! It's like opening the windows and letting in all the fresh air. Sonic Cult is great,” said Mrs. Gauper. “It reminds me of when the Catholic Church had their second Vatican Council and tried to bring their church into the 20th century. Now Rev. In Jin Moon is pulling our church into the 21st century. We appreciate Rev. In Jin Moon's practical wisdom and inspirational leadership. We just hope and pray that the great revival being implemented by Rev. Moon will reach everyone, including our kids, like the rising tide that lifts all boats. In the meantime we will try to keep the faith and walk the walk!”

In an anecdote that displays the multi-generational aspect of their faith, Mr. Gauper shared: “My father, an 87-year-old World War II veteran, is one of our biggest supporters. For many years while he operated a fruit stand in Wheatland, he had our Blessing photo displayed. He has been living with us for about four years. He is always speaking highly of us, and of course our children. When we gave him Father's autobiography to read we were taken aback when he later proclaimed, ‘I'm going to throw that book away!’ When we asked why, he said, ‘Because it kept me up until 4:00 a.m.!’”