

## Jhon and Marina Acevedo Share Their Secrets for Witnessing Success

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*Chicago pastors Jhon and Marina Acevedo teach the Divine Principle and provide marriage counseling sessions on a weekly basis.*

Unificationists Jhon and Marina Acevedo, having brought nearly 70 people to the Unification Church during the last ten years set a new standard for witnessing. Such efforts towards bringing so many “spiritual children” or new members to the church resulted in their receiving the “Cheongpyeong Special Great Works” award in Korea on January 14, 2012 at the 17th Anniversary of the Worldwide Members’ Witnessing Competition. The award recognizes them as an exemplary couple in the field of growing the church.

The Acevedo’s spiritual children range from ages 15-59. Mr. Acevedo, 51, and Mrs. Acevedo, 50, joined the Unification Church in Medellin, Colombia in 1984 and were married by Rev. Sun Myung Moon in the 30,000-couple Blessing Ceremony in 1992. According to Mr. Acevedo, he and his wife brought 40 members into the church before 1992. They came to Chicago in 2002 with their son, Christian, who was at the time 15 years old.

“When we came 10 years ago to America, we had nothing,” said Mr. Acevedo. “We had just started living with my sister, Rhia. It was hard for Christian to get along with the other second-generation Unificationists since he was not born into the church.”

Once they arrived to America, the Acevedo’s started to form a Hispanic community. “We did so for our son,” said Mrs. Acevedo. “We found out about his difficulties as a first-generation Unificationist surrounded by so many second-generation Unificationists, or ‘Blessed Children’ his age and about how it wasn’t easy for him to adopt the religion.”

“Therefore, we wanted to give him a support group,” said Mr. Acevedo. “It takes time for the children coming to the church as new members to understand that they can truly be accepted and welcome. We wanted to show that not only the Blessed Children are entitled to the church – but that anyone is welcomed to it.”

To help support the youth within the Hispanic community, the Acevedo’s organized workshops led by Pastor Jario and Leena Vincentz-Gavin, a second-generation Blessed Couple of the Chicago Family Church. “We have been inviting Pastor Jario whenever we have workshops in Camp Kohoe. We also

asked some volunteers from our second-generation to come and talk to our Hispanic youth,” said Mr. Acevedo. “After the workshops, when the kids come back home inspired, the parents can see how good the teachings of the church can be.”



Throughout the week, the Acevedo’s busy themselves by meeting with the members and the guests they bring. Mr. Acevedo said: “Mondays to Wednesdays are days we teach the *Divine Principle*. On Thursdays we have appointments for marriage counseling. On Fridays we visit homes for family fellowship, engaging in open-topic discussions and testimonies. On Saturdays, we hold a one-day seminar with the Spanish community about different topics, such as family values and sexual abstinence. We also hold once-a-month *Divine-Principle* workshops for all the guests we’ve gathered on the same day.”

“On Sunday, we hold a once-a-month Hispanic service in the Chicago Family Church to celebrate everyone’s birthdays,” said Mrs. Acevedo. “After the service, we show a small segment of In Jin Nim’s message from Lovin’ Life and then we expand it and explain to our members. Then we decorate the dining hall and we have cake. Jhon and I buy small gifts for everyone so that they’ll all feel welcome. We have a volunteer DJ so that we can have lively music, and there’s a variety of dancing, including Salsa and Merengue. Everyone brings in potluck dishes so that we can all share. That’s how we welcome the new guests.”

The Acevedo’s have previous experience in counseling as they both have worked in hospitals to tend to youth with drug issues and/or a history of physical abuse. With these skills under their belt, they counsel members and their guests, all the while witnessing about the Unification Church. The Acevedo’s say that many of their counseling techniques are derived from the teachings of the *Divine Principle*.