

Belvedere Family Church Hosts Matching Education Workshop

Debby Gullery
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On April 23, 2016, the Belvedere Family Church sponsored a local Matching Education Workshop for parents. Knowing that there were many families with teenagers and young adults who had not yet attended a national Parent Matching Convocation (PMC), they wanted to offer parents a day of education to prepare them for the time when their children are ready to begin the matching engagement process.

Since many of the parents of young adults in the community are Japanese, the event organizers made an extra effort to make the program comfortable and accessible to them. They invited Ayako Heller from the National Blessing & Family Ministry (BFM) to translate, as well as two experienced Matching Advisors from the Westchester area, David Okamoto and Masae Josephs, available to run discussion groups in Japanese and answer questions throughout the day.

Almost 50 participants from Westchester and the surrounding areas attended the event, and most of the attendees had never matched a child and were eager to learn everything they could. The main presentations were given by Debby Gullery, who has taught at national PMCs around the country and is the Westchester BFM representative. The morning schedule consisted of two presentations explaining the matching process step by step. After a relaxing lunch provided by the staff at East Garden, the participants divided into groups to discuss what concerns and hopes they had about matching their own children.



Following the discussions, there was a presentation explaining all the resources available to parents to support them in the process, including the BFM website and the three matching websites. Copies of the matching handbooks in both English and Japanese were available for participants to purchase.

By this time in the program, parents had a lot of questions, so it was the perfect opportunity to hear from other parents who had already successfully matched their children and whose children have attended the Marriage Blessing Ceremony. First they heard from Diana Perkins, who shared about what she and her husband learned in the process of matching their oldest son. Then David and Julie Okamoto shared their diverse experiences of matching four of their five children. Everyone appreciated their candor and honesty. Masae Josephs then joined them and as a panel of parents and matching advisors, they answered questions from the audience.



The final presentation was entitled “Getting to the Heart of the Matter”, and introduced practical skills that parents could use to strengthen the relationship between themselves and their teenagers and young adult children. Debby reminded parents how important it was to make an effort, expand their hearts, and listen to their children carefully. At the end of the presentation, she encouraged everyone to practice these skills by sharing in pairs about a challenging childhood experience.

Most of the participants took the time to write reflections of their experience, and many were empowered to work on their relationships with their children and to prepare themselves for the matching of their children by becoming more familiar with the process.



One Japanese participant wrote, “I think I have to start a conversation about the Blessing and matching as soon as possible. This program gave me many good ideas to begin with and practical skills to do it in the right way.” One father reflected that, “Having a good relationship is everything. I understand that, but the point is I have to practice it. Not practicing it could be hurting other people, so I need to be serious about it. I need to be serious about it also because it is the key to a successful matching and Blessing.” One mother expressed, “I feel grateful to the presenters for their passion and guidance on the parents’ matching process, and the contents that I learned today encouraged me to continue making efforts with my son.”

