



# Education Advocate

September / October 2007  
Vol. 8, No. 5

A Publication of the Commonwealth Education Organization

The Commonwealth Education Organization presents the  
**Women of Character Conference**  
*“Reclaiming Feminism”*

**Keynote Speaker: Wendy Shalit**  
*With Amy Scheuring*

Tuesday, October 23, 2007  
7 p.m.

The Carnegie Museum of Art Auditorium

**Tickets: \$20 adult / \$5 Student with ID**

*Tickets available at the door or  
call 412.967.9691 for reservations*

Wendy Shalit speaks for an increasing number of young women who reject harmful female stereotypes found in our popular culture and desire a new feminism – a feminism that enables girls and young women to strengthen their individual identity and celebrate their femininity.

In *A Return to Modesty: Discovering the Lost Virtue*, her first book written at age twenty-three, Ms. Shalit examines the popular culture and finds that girls are pressured by the media, music, and celebrities to pursue lifestyles that are self-destructive. Modesty is wrongly thought to be about repression, she argues, when really it is about protecting genuine intimacy.

Ms. Shalit proposes a daring solution– a counterrevolution - that will create a culture in which girls are empowered to set their own individual courses, making choices that enable them to build happy, healthy, fulfilled lives.

Eight years later, Ms. Shalit marks the progress of American females in her recently released book, *Girls Gone Mild*. Although she finds that many young women continue to struggle with our culture’s expectations, Ms. Shalit celebrates the growing number of girls who are rebelling, choosing integrity over popularity, and realizing that “it’s not bad to be good.”

Amy Scheuring, a local advocate helping young people make wise, healthy life choices, will join Ms. Shalit in offering a positive, life-affirming message for females of all ages. Ms. Scheuring is Director of the North Pittsburgh Pregnancy Center, Project Coordinator for Wholehearted, and author of *Sex: More Than a Plumbing Lesson*.

During the evening, Women of Character awards will be given to several local women who are role models for us all.



**Join Wendy, Amy, and the Commonwealth Education Organization in examining what it means to be a female in America and encouraging girls to stand up to the cultural influences that impact them in a negative way on a daily basis.**

An Invitation to the *Women of Character Conference*

Marriage, Family, and Raising Children Successfully

Commonwealth Education Organization

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**Education Advocate**

is produced bimonthly by the Commonwealth Education Organization, a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization.

Editor: E. Perlman

# Marriage and Family: Keys to Raising Children Successfully

*“A large body of social science research indicates that healthy, married-parent families are an optimal environment for promoting the well-being of children. Children raised by both biological parents are less likely...to be poor, to drop out of school, to have difficulty finding a job, to become teen parents or to experience emotional or behavioral problems.”*<sup>1</sup>

In an interview about the latest education trend toward development of taxpayer-funded preschool programs such as Pennsylvania’s Pre-K Counts initiative, former US Assistant Secretary of Education Susan B. Neuman commented: *“We need to remember that Pre-K as an intervention has a modest impact on a child’s cognitive development, but that parenting has a huge impact.”*<sup>2</sup>

Speaking at a CEO event last month, Dr. Leonard Sax, author, practicing family physician, and authority on gender-specific education, asserted that *Americans must once again celebrate the family because parents and family are crucial to raising children successfully.* Mothers and fathers need to be positive role models for their children as they grow up, and as they then become parents of the next generation.

These researchers and experts agree that marriage and family are the major factors in raising healthy, educated, successful children. However, elected officials and educators who repeatedly attempt to “fix” America’s “education crisis” by expanding government programs seem to overlook this important fact: ***At the end of the school day, children go home to their families.*** And family structure is more important than class size, curriculum, and cost-per-student.

Much of the research on marriage and the family is consistent in its findings, and pertains to children regardless of race, gender, and other socio-economic indicators. A significant conclusion:

***“Marriage – specifically if it is low-conflict and long lasting - is so important to child wellbeing that it is replacing race, class, and neighborhood as the greatest source of difference in child outcomes.”***<sup>3</sup>

It is important to note that such positive findings for intact, married-parent families do not preclude a single-parent or step-parent family from successfully raising children. The research identifies the *optimum* family structure, not the *only* structure. However, the research findings are profound and deserve close examination.

Two studies<sup>3,4</sup> contain important data:

*Children from intact, married-parent families are more likely:*

- to avoid early sexual activity
- to have positive attitudes toward marriage and greater success in marriage
- to be generally healthier
- to graduate from high school
- to earn a four year college degree and get a better job

*These children are also less likely:*

- to be poor or experience persistent economic insecurity
- to have school attendance or behavioral problems
- to get involved in dangerous, anti-social activities
- to commit crimes and be in prison

Researchers have also found that involved fathers have a positive impact on their child’s academic achievements and behavior.<sup>5</sup> Children whose fathers are engaged in their rearing:

- score higher on assessment tests and earn higher grades in school
- are more likely to graduate from high school and continue their education
- are more likely to succeed in their career and personal relationships
- are more likely to have more positive characteristics such as self-control, self-respect, & positive life skills
- are less likely to be involved in teen violence, delinquency, and other unlawful behavior<sup>6</sup>

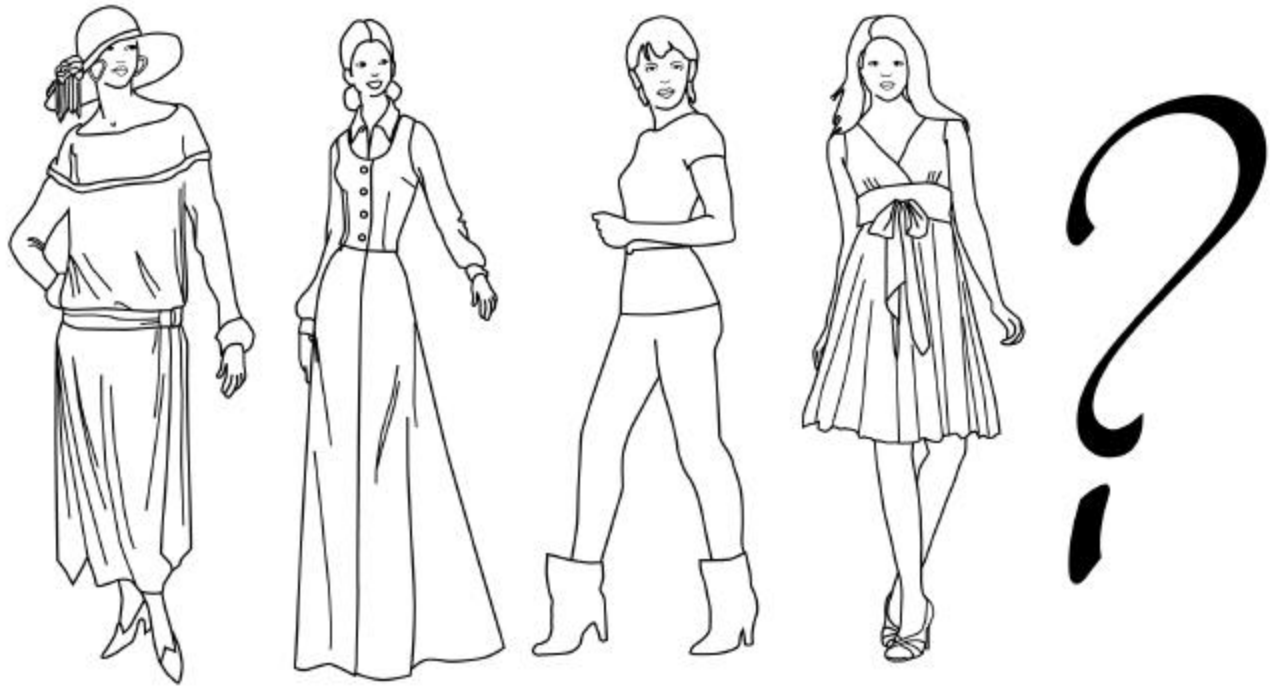
As the body of research supporting intact, married-parent families grows, some important questions must be asked:

1. **Why do the media and popular culture so often demean the traditional, nuclear family?**
2. **Why do some parents do what is good for them rather than what is best for their children?**
3. **Why do both state and federal governments create and expand education programs that can ultimately weaken the family?** Initiatives like Pre-K Counts tempt more and more parents to abdicate their parenting responsibilities to childcare workers in government-controlled programs. Then, ironically, as more children enter the tax payer-funded system, the annual program costs escalate, forcing even more parents to work longer and harder to pay taxes that support such programs. This could result in stronger government programs and weaker families.

To counter this trend, public policy makers need to understand that, *“publicly sponsored alternatives for child-rearing cannot easily replicate the advantages of growing up in a home with one’s own married mother and father.”*<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, *“strengthening marriage is a legitimate and important goal of public policy”*<sup>8</sup> because stronger families raise more successful children.

Parents, policy makers, educators, and others need courage to acknowledge and discuss these up-to-date research findings on the state of marriage and family in America in order to make decisions that are truly best for children.

1. “Marriage Promotion in Low-Income Families Fact Sheet.” National Council on Family Relations. April 2003.
2. Neuman, Susan B. “Reading Rockets Interview with Susan B. Neuman.” April 2007. [www.readingrockets.org](http://www.readingrockets.org).
3. “Whitehead Senate Testimony.” The National Marriage Project. 28 April 2004. <http://marriage.rutgers.edu>
4. “Why Marriage Matters, Second Edition: Twenty-Six Conclusions from the Socials.” Institute for American Values. July 2007.
5. King, Valerie. “Fathers have a great impact on their children’s lives.” 12 June 2007.
6. Evans, Garrett D. & Fogarty, Kate. “The Hidden Benefits of Being an Involved Father.” University of Florida. 14 March 2007.
7. “Should We Live Together?” Smart Marriage-The Coalition for Marriage, Family, and Couples Education. 26 July 2007.
8. “Family Structure and Educational Outcomes.” Center for Marriage and Families. Research Brief No. 1. Nov 2005.



## *Modesty & the Modern Woman*

Are we failing our daughters and granddaughters?  
Are we concerned with how they dress and behave?  
Is the popular culture and media harming them? What can we do?  
Come to the Women of Character Conference and learn how we can

*Reclaim Feminism and self-respect for women.*



### *About the Speaker*

The author of two groundbreaking books, *A Return to Modesty* and *Girls Gone Mild*, Wendy Shalit shatters the popular myth that girls and young women want to be thin, sexy, and promiscuous. After discussing how these lifestyles too often cause anorexia, bulimia, depression, and unhappiness, Ms. Shalit proposes a daring change – a counterrevolution – that will create a culture in which natural, feminine modesty empowers girls and young women to set their own individual courses, making choices that will enable them to build happy, healthy, fulfilled lives.

Born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Wendy received her Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy from Williams College in 1997. She is the founder of *ModestyZone.net*, *ModestlyYours.net*, and *girlsgonemild.com* – three powerful online forums for girls and young women who dare to question the current culture and seek a deeper meaning in their own lives.

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## **The decline of the American family is detrimental to American children**

### ***If U.S. Family Structure Was as Strong Today as It Was in 1970:***

- ⇒ 1,040,000 fewer children each year would be suspended from school
- ⇒ 643,000 fewer children each year would fail a grade at school
- ⇒ 531,000 fewer children would need psychotherapy
- ⇒ 515,000 fewer children would smoke
- ⇒ 453,000 fewer children each year would be involved in violence
- ⇒ 179,000 fewer children would think of suicide
- ⇒ 71,000 fewer would actually attempt suicide

Source: Amato, Paul R. "The Impact of Family Formation Change on the Cognitive, Social, and Emotional Well-Being of the Next Generation." *The Future of Children*. Fall 2005.