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Singles standing out rather than being stood up

Networking ministry to host singles conference in Cary

By: Cheryl Scanlan

RALEIGH--- Who says being single is a drag? Rather than sitting at home on Friday nights pouting in front of their TVs, or gathering in groups at nightclubs in search of their soul mate, many singles in the Triangle are impacting the community for Christ with their energy and availability.

What makes these singles stand out rather than wait to be stood up? Kris Swiatocho, director of the Singles Network, explains, "When you are so tight with God, the outflow pours into everything else. People think singles are walking around living in defeat. Well, for some that may be true, and I can't wait to get them involved, but for those who are involved, you won't find very many feeling empty and lost."

Swiatocho has big plans for the singles of the Triangle area. Through the Singles Network, a non-profit ministry, Swiatocho provides resources, networking and leadership development for single leaders, pastors and individuals. The aim is to provide tools to help area churches and singles ministries grow within themselves.

"'Single people living alone' is the fastest growing of all households in the United States. They have more money, more time and more energy, because they do not have families of their own that require a major portion of those resources. Imagine if we were truly ministering to the singles in our churches and allowing them to minister to others as a result the far-reaching impact our singles could have in our community."

Swiatocho says many churches are already reaching their singles. "But a majority of others just don't know how to minister to a single. Should you put them in a mixed group with marrieds? Keep them by themselves? How does a church even define singleness? You have 'divorced,' 'single again,' 'separated,' and 'never married.' Each subgroup has its own needs because of the pain they come from. Some churches are not called to have a singles ministry. If a church only has a dozen or so singles, maybe the best thing the Singles Network can do is connect them to a vibrant single's ministry at a nearby church. Other churches literally have a hundred or more adult singles sitting in Sunday worship services with no singles ministry offering while the church puts all their resources into marriage small groups and Bible studies. Once helping churches identify whether the need is there, the Singles Network will help them build their ministry through various resources and connections."

In addition to the building of singles ministries at churches, Swiatocho and a team of church leaders are joining to sponsor conferences and other events for singles. Their aim is to create a community of spiritual growth. Swiatocho also offers leadership consulting and networking services to encourage

singles' involvement in their own churches and communities.

The main event she sponsors each month is Believer's Community. About 200 singles gather at Crossroads Fellowship Church on Millbrook Road in Raleigh the second Friday of every month for a coffeehouse setting. Some commute up to an hour to attend the event. Live music, drama, refreshments and motivating messages draw people to one another and to God. One attendee Theresa Waters said, "God is showing me being single is better than I used to think it was."

Scott Horton, who attended recently for the first time, said, "It's encouraging to know there are other singles in the area that think like you. I don't have to be a lone ranger. My church doesn't have anyone my age to connect with. I'm too old for youth activities and many of the adult activities are too awkward because of my single status."

Another key component of Swiatocho's plan for singles' spiritual development in the region involves Dick Purnell's Single Life Resources, a division of Campus Crusade for Christ. Last year about 500 singles attended Purnell's conference. The next annual Single Life's Resource conference will be held March 15 at Colonial Baptist Church in Cary. Topics will include "Understanding the Opposite Sex," "Living with Yourself and Liking It," and "Making Your Life Count," and there will be breakout sessions and additional speakers. Swiatocho expects nearly 1,000 singles to attend this year.

Want to know more? Call (919) 779-3686, or visit the Web site at www.thesinglesnetwork.org.
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