



August 2011

# ProSAAM and You

## The Project is Ending: What Happens Next?

*An interview with principal investigator Dr. Steven Beach, Distinguished Research Professor of Psychology and Director of the William A. and Barbara R. Owens Institute for Behavioral Research at the University of Georgia*

As ProSAAM is wrapping up and steadily coming to an end, we would like to thank each of you for your participation and contributions. Many of you may wonder what happens next in the research process as we assemble the data that we have collected and reflect upon what we have learned over these past five years. Dr. Steven Beach, the principal investigator for ProSAAM, took time out to share his thoughts on future directions for the project.

*Many participants are excited to hear what we have discovered from the project. When should they expect to hear about our findings?*

**SB:** We have a report coming out soon in a journal belonging to the American Psychological Association. The title of the paper is "Enhancing marital enrichment through spirituality: Efficacy data for prayer focused relationship enhancement." We are very excited about this report because it is the first time a major outcome study has been focused on the use of prayer in marriage. We found that both types of marital enhancement intervention (skills alone and prayer plus skills) helped couples in a variety of ways, but including prayer as part of the intervention was particularly helpful for wives.

Thanks to wonderful participation from everyone involved in ProSAAM, it will also not be very long before we are able to write a report on findings that take us through the three-year follow-up. We are definitely all excited about that.

*With the end in sight, what do you see as future directions for the project?*

**SB:** It seems clear that including prayer in marital interventions has the potential to add to current approaches in marital enrichment. We are planning to work with collaborators here in Georgia as well as around the country to continue to make prayer a part of mainstream marital interventions.

In our collaborations with the inventors of the PREP program we have identified opportunities to make prayer accessible to many couples as well as to leaders of marital enrichment programs. In fact, they are now making the ProSAAM program available as one of their standard programs. So, we could not be happier. Also, Tera Hurt, Scott Stanley, and I worked together to create a prayer journal approach to marital enhancement and that is also available through PREP. Visit the PREP website at <http://www.prepinc.com>, and you'll find the journal in the PREP Swtore along with Faith-based or Christian PREP materials.

*Are there any proposed extensions of the projects?*

**SB:** Currently, we are supporting efforts in Florida to look at the underpinnings of prayer-based approaches. We want to better understand how prayer helps and whether prayer for one's partner will provide health benefits to spouses as well as benefiting their relationships. I

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Program for Strong African  
American Marriages (ProSAAM)  
University of Georgia  
Boyd GSRC, Room 552  
Athens, GA 30602  
Phone: (706) 542-7015  
Fax: (706) 542-6064  
Email: [prosaam@uga.edu](mailto:prosaam@uga.edu)  
<http://www.uga.edu/prosaam>

think this may be an important direction for prayer research in the future.

*What have been the biggest challenges and rewards as the principal investigator on these projects?*

**SB:** The biggest challenges were handled by the amazing staff who have worked on ProSAAM over the past several years. There were many obstacles to overcome, but the staff of ProSAAM was never daunted and never stopped. As a result, they met and overcame every obstacle we encountered. I cannot begin to express how much gratitude I feel for having been blessed with such an outstanding group of coworkers.

It has been one of the great pleasures in my life to get to know many, many people through the ProSAAM project and to see the level of commitment so many people have to strong marriages and strong communities. This group certainly includes the staff of ProSAAM, and the many dedicated group leaders who helped us reach so many couples. It also includes many pastors and church leaders who helped introduce us to their congregations and who have supported us with their words of encouragement, their leadership, and their prayers. Likewise, we are grateful to the community leaders who have played a role in shaping the program, and to many couples who came forward to participate in the program and share their reactions with us. We are all now part of the ProSAAM village.

Thanks to all of you who have been our friends and collaborators in making this project a success.

## Reflections from the Field

*One ProSAAM field interviewer shares his thoughts on the final round of data collection.*

If you and your family members have completed all of your surveys, you probably have only heard from us through the occasional postcard or newsletter. If you have not yet completed the project, it is likely that you have received e-mails, phone calls, and Facebook messages from us in an effort to collect your questionnaires. At times, it has even become necessary for us to come to your home to collect completed questionnaires or conduct in-home interviews. Tores Cox, a veteran ProSAAM field interviewer, was asked to offer insight into what it has been like collecting data in the field lately. Here is what he had to share:

*Just out of curiosity, what is the farthest you have traveled for an interview?*

**TC:** Macon, Georgia which is about 100 miles away.

*What makes this final stage of data collection different from previous data collection waves?*

**TC:** This final stage of data collection is more difficult because we are mostly targeting people who have been hard to reach for some time. Another factor that makes it more difficult is that a higher percentage of these hard to reach couples have separated or divorced. Since both partners are usually not living together, we have to locate each of them individually.

*What has been the most challenging aspect of being in the field?*

**TC:** The most challenging part has been trying to locate the couples. Without the additional contacts information, it would be almost impossible to locate hard to reach couples. Also, because of the economy, people are working hard to hold onto their jobs or are searching for jobs, so they are less available than they have been in the past. This makes matching my schedule with their availability more complex.

*What has been the most rewarding aspect?*

**TC:** Returning to interview couples who I interviewed four years ago, and having them invite me into their home again warmly with a smile has been great. It is rewarding to see them reflect upon the tools they learned in the program and the impact those tools have had on them. It is also refreshing to see couples who are separated talking along the lines of reconciliation. It is a pleasure to see them communicating without anger, and as friends, and sometimes as possible mates again. Life is too short to be angry and revengeful. It is great to see couples' relationships take a turn for the better.

*How have you grown personally from your work as a field interviewer?*

**TC:** I have grown in patience. I have grown in my respect for the impact of the world economy and the diversity of life. This experience has also reminded me that marriage is a holy and sacred entity that is to be taken seriously. Marriage is a true solid commitment and it takes friendship and respect to make it successful. I also see how the impact of marriage has a large influence upon children and goes beyond the bloodline to affect extended family relationships and friendships.

*What message do you have for couples who are difficult to reach or who have yet to complete their interviews?*

**TC:** I want couples to know that finishing the project can be a valuable experience because, as they answer the survey questions, hopefully they can reflect back on their previous answers from years ago and recognize ways they have changed. They might recognize that they are using tools from the program such as communication skills. Completing the survey can be a good self-assessment exercise because sometimes, when we really think about it, we realize that we have not actually implemented the changes we said we would make. Hopefully, looking at these questions again will either reflect participants' growth, or motivate them to modify their behaviors to be consistent with changes they set out to make.

# Making Time for Family Fun

## *Activities to Promote Oneness*

Some foundational themes in ProSAAM have been the importance of oneness, fun and friendship. Spending recreational time together can be a great way to relax from the hustle of everyday life, grow closer as a family, and create new memories. Whether your schedule and budget can accommodate a staycation, daycation, or vacation, Georgia and surrounding areas offer many unique opportunities for family fun.

### **Sandy Creek Park**

**Features:** Beach, Canoeing, Fishing, Basketball, Playground and more  
**Price:** \$2 park entry fee per person  
**Location:** 400 Bob Holman Rd.; Athens, GA 30607; 706-613-3631

### **The Botanical Garden of Georgia**

**Features:** Gardens, Educational Programs, Concerts, Café and more  
**Price:** Many free activities  
**Location:** 2450 S Milledge Ave, Athens, GA 30605; 706-542-6159

### **Georgia Museum of Art**

**Features:** Galleries, Sculpture Garden, Kids Activities, Café, Special Events  
**Price:** Free (Suggested donation \$3)  
**Location:** 90 Carlton Street Athens, GA 30602; 706-542-4662

### **Washington Farms**

**Features:** (Seasonal) Strawberry Picking, Pumpkin Patch, Corn Maze  
**Price:** Varies  
**Locations:** (1) 270 Willowwind Drive, Loganville, GA 30052; (770) 554-8119  
(2) 5691 Hog Mountain Rd., Bogart, GA 30622 (706) 769-0627

### **Mayfield Dairy Farms**

**Features:** Ice Cream Factory Tours, Gift Shop, Old-Fashioned Ice-Cream Parlor  
**Price:** Varies  
**Location:** 1160 Broadway Ave., Braselton, GA 30517  
1-888-298-0396

### **Apex Museum**

**Features:** History from an African American Perspective; Special Events  
**Price:** \$4  
**Location:** 135 Auburn Ave NE; Atlanta, GA; 404-523-2739

### **Helen, Georgia**

**Features:** Alpine Village, Bed & Breakfasts, Water Sports, Camping, Dining, Horseback Riding, Scenic Water Fall, Cabbage Patch Doll Museum  
**Price:** Varies  
**Location:** Helen, Georgia  
www.helenga.org

### **Charleston, South Carolina**

**Features:** Beaches, Museums, African American History Tours, Dining, City Market, Spoleto Arts Festival  
**Price:** Varies  
**Location:** Charleston, SC;  
charlestoncvb.com; gullahtours.com;  
charlestonfamilyfun.com;

## Just for Laughs

*You know you're a ProSAAM participant when.....*

We have thoroughly enjoyed working with all of our participants over the years. We have spoken to you on the phone, corresponded via e-mail, and have been guests in your home on multiple occasions. We could not ask for a more lively, informative, fun, and eclectic group of participants. It is difficult to describe our diverse group of participants in just a few words, but when we thought about experiences of a

true ProSAAM participant, here is what came to mind.

### **You know you're a ProSAAM participant when.....**

- \* You depend on ProSAAM postcards to help you remember important holidays--including your anniversary.
- \* The phrase "What I hear you saying is....." is a regular part of your daily conversation.
- \* You could almost pay off your bills in ProSAAM gift cards.
- \* You have moved three times and even changed your last name and you can't figure out how the ProSAAM team always knows how to find you.
- \* You answer the door for a ProSAAM interview in your night clothes because the ProSAAM research team has been trying to contact you for so long, they just feel like family.
- \* You feel good knowing that, despite all of the challenges facing African American marriages, you are doing your part to encourage positive changes for the future.

## Our Space

### *Online Resources for African American Couples and Families*

Cyberspace is imbedded into just about every facet of our lives these days. We utilize the internet for business, entertainment, and it has become a preferred method of communication. Did you know that there are many websites specifically dedicated to reaching African American couples and families? These sites are such a commodity because we can see ourselves and our experiences reflected in the storylines of the journalists, bloggers, and everyday people who contribute to the posts. From advice and information, to stories and product

reviews, the following links offer a variety of resources that we think you might enjoy:

### Parenting

Weparent.com

Mybrownbaby.com

Mommybrown.com

Blackandmarriedwithchildren.com

### Relationships

Blackrelationships.org

### African American Men

Mybrotha.com

### African American Women

Essence.com

Hellobeautiful.com

### General

Newsone.com

Theblackbar.net

## Spotlight on Research the Team

### *Achievements and Announcements*

\* ProSAAM assistant research scientist, **Dr. Tera R. Hurt**, was awarded three research grants over the past two years. One project focuses on the meaning and experiences of marriage among Black men. The second project is centered on a relationship education program for African American adolescents, and the third project focuses on observed communication within marital relationships. Thanks Dr. Hurt for all of

the contributions you make to our children and families!

\* ProSAAM graduate research assistant, formerly intervention specialist and assistant program coordinator, **Perdeta L. Bush**, completed her Master's degree in adult education in August 2011. She moved to Pennsylvania to further her education at Pennsylvania State University-Harrisburg where she will pursue an Ed.D. degree. Congratulations on all of your accomplishments Perdeta!

\*ProSAAM recruitment and engagement specialist, **LaTrena Anderson Stokes**, received the 2011 Jeanette Rankin Scholarship, which supports the educational pursuits of women. LaTrena began pursuing a double-major in child and family development and religion at the University of Georgia in June 2011. Best wishes to you LaTrena as you strive toward your goals!

## Help Us to Keep in Touch

### *Please Update Your Contact Information*

Have you recently moved or made changes in your contact information? We would appreciate knowing your updated information so that we can stay in contact with you. We will want to be able to reach you as the results from the study emerge and if other participation opportunities arise. Please contact us via e-mail at [prosaam@uga.edu](mailto:prosaam@uga.edu) or via phone at (706) 542-7015 with your information. Thanks for helping us to keep in touch with you!

## In Memoriam

We would like to acknowledge and extend our deepest sympathy to the spouses and families of ProSAAM participants who have passed away in recent years. We appreciate the precious time they shared with us. Their impact on African American families through their participation in ProSAAM is one of the many ways that their legacy will live on.

### **Participants' Choice:**

Have a topic you'd like to see addressed in a future newsletter?  
E-mail your suggestions to [prosaam@uga.edu](mailto:prosaam@uga.edu).