



Jennifer & Boomer Cornwell of Frisco say a good marriage doesn't just happen.

photo by Chris Fritchie

A Weekend to Remember

By Monica Issitt

FRISCO RESIDENTS Jennifer and Boomer Cornwell are a happily married couple. But as they will tell you, their success did not come by accident. “Marriage is work,” says Mrs. Cornwell, an assistant merchandising manager at Dr. Pepper. “We work hard to be the best we can be for each other.”

That’s why they’ve decided to spend this Valentine’s Day with hundreds of other couples at the Gaylord Texan Resort in Grapevine attending Family Life’s “Weekend to Remember” marriage conference.

Married six-and-a-half years, the couple is expecting their first child in August. Mr. Cornwell, an account executive with a pharmaceutical company, says he hopes the conference will help the two of them prepare for what’s ahead. “The best way to be really successful parents is to be a success in your marriage,” he says.

The decision to attend the event was a no-brainer for Mr. and Mrs. Cornwell.

“We’ve heard so many great things about the conference. We are really excited about it,” says Mrs. Cornwell. “We both agree neither of us is perfect. There’s always room for improvement.”

FROM HAVING RESERVATIONS TO MAKING THEM

The decision to attend the conference was not quite as easy for John and Susan Mathis. “I didn’t want to go that first year,” Mr. Mathis recalls. But now you might say he’s jumped in with both feet. This year the McKinney couple will spend their fifth consecutive Valentine’s Day at the Weekend to Remember conference. Mr. Mathis made the reservations and booked their room, and is prepared for a ballroom dancing date with his wife. They’ve taken lessons just for this occasion.

“John was raised on a farm,” Mrs. Mathis explains. “His idea of dancing to anything but country music is, ‘Why?’” His

tune has changed dramatically since going to the conference the first time.

“I had been working a lot of hours and didn’t really want to go to a hotel,” Mr. Mathis recalls about the first year they attended. “However, Susan insisted because, although I didn’t realize it, she was at her wits’ end. As the mother of a two-year-old with little time to herself, she was about to pull her hair out.”

“To say I was at my wits’ end is speaking mildly,” Susan adds. “I had not had a full day, let alone three days and two nights, to myself in two years! I felt like my body was on loan to our daughter.”

In hindsight Mr. Mathis says he understands, “We men can be kind of dumb sometimes, and I didn’t realize how much Susan needed that conference or how much I needed it for that matter.”

The Weekend to Remember conference encourages couples to think about the important things in life. A pervasive theme of the weekend is making your

John & Susan Mathis say the conference helps them keep their marriage the #1 priority.
photo by Chris Frutchie

marriage the number one priority – even above children and careers.

“I tend to put too much focus on being a mom a lot of the time,” Mrs. Mathis says. Her husband identifies, adding, “I get wrapped up in my job pretty easily, and that’s one of the things they talk about at the conference.”

Seeing his priorities more clearly now, Mr. Mathis shares this wisdom, “There are so many issues that push against us everyday that the important things like our marriages and our relationships tend to get put on the back burner for a while. Problem is, the back burner stuff never gets moved to the front. Weekend to Remember is structured so that you have to think about the important things.”

THE PARENT TRAP

As devoted parents, the Mathises found themselves falling into the trap many people fall into: so much of their time and energy was devoted to parenting, there was little left over for each other. What they learned at the conference is that a strong marriage is probably the best gift you can give your child. As Mr. Mathis says, “If a child has a firm understanding that no matter what, you are devoted to each other, they can relax and have time to grow up. If they are worried about stability in the home, they can’t just be a kid.”

At that first conference five years ago, Mr. and Mrs. Mathis went on their first date in two years and realized very quickly that they had lost touch with each other. The only common topic they had was their daughter. So that’s where they started. In talking about their love for her, they both focused on how the other was a terrific parent. What went unsaid for the moment was that they both had a long way to go in their rating as a spouse.

Although Mrs. Mathis was convinced that a marriage conference was just what they needed, she too had reservations about going. “I was a bit nervous,”



she says now. “I thought we might have to break up into groups and share, and I was not ready for that.” None of the things she feared happened and by noon on the first day both of them were loosening up and feeling more comfortable. “The speakers made us laugh. They talked about all the stuff nobody talks about. I realized I was not alone. These people had walked this path before me and they made it. If they could do it, we could too.”

Mr. Mathis says one of the most powerful experiences at the conference involved putting his feelings on paper. “They encourage you to write a letter to your wife. You’re supposed to think

about what drew you together and find a way to say it to her. It had been a long time since I wrote a letter like that. It was difficult, but worth the effort.”

Mrs. Mathis also had to write a letter, but it was easier for her, as it is for most women who are more accustomed to expressing their emotions and putting them into words. “I had no idea how hard it was for John to write that letter, and now I value each letter he writes me even more,” she says.

Over the years, many revelations have come from those letters. About one of them, Mrs. Mathis says, “I felt like someone hit the ice sculpture all around me and shattered it into a million pieces.”

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Big things come from love letters and funny speakers, as the Mathises can attest. Throughout the weekend though, each was wondering if the other was “getting it.” Fortunately, it wasn’t long before they started to realize there were places where they, themselves, could improve. “That’s a very powerful place to get to in a relationship; where you realize you can change some things, too,” says Mrs. Mathis. “When we both got to that place, we were holding hands again. Not that lovey-dovey handholding, but sort of a peace-treaty handholding.”

The Mathises have promised each other that they will return to Weekend to Remember every year. “The first year made us look at our marriage in a new light,” Mrs. Mathis says. “The second year brought a deeper level of faithfulness, the third year an abiding commitment and the fourth brought joy.” She goes on to say, “This year, after being diagnosed with cardiomyopathy, I know it will bring thankfulness – for life and another year with John.”

Mr. Mathis is more convinced every year that the conference is a moving force in their marriage. “Anything you spend a full weekend concentrating on is bound to get better, and I think there are a lot of people who could use that,” he says. His wife agrees, adding, “You know, we study for years to get out of high school and four more for college. To get a driver’s license we have to pass tests and people now take classes for childbirth. To get married, you only have to get a license, so I look at this weekend as the class I never knew I should take. You can drag your feet and think you can pass without the class. You can fool yourself into thinking that everything is okay. This weekend makes John and me learn things about ourselves and each other; it has changed our marriage.” Then, after a moment of reflection she says, “After all, isn’t that what Valentine’s Day is all about – seeking and finding and loving the one that was meant for you?”

Monica Issitt is a frequent contributor to Frisco STYLE Magazine. She lives with her family in Little Rock, Ark., which also happens to be the home of Family Life, the organization that sponsors Weekend to Remember conferences.

*Tag & Tara Green
photo provided by Tag Green*



A Decade Later, Love Wins Out

By Brittany Cordon

TAG GREEN AND TARA PORTER liked each other immediately upon meeting during their freshman year at Texas A&M University but, much to their friends’ surprise the interest wasn’t romantic in nature. Over time, however, Tag’s feelings began to change and by the end of

his junior year, he knew that Tara would one day be his wife. Senior year proved to be vague and awkward for the two, as Tara was still not romantically interested in Tag, yet he was still firm in his feelings for both her and their future together. After graduation, Tara moved to Dallas to begin a teaching career. Tag did not want to give up hope on a future with Tara, but eventually decided that maybe it was time for him to move on, too.

A decade later, by a twist of fate, Tag and Tara began attending the same church in Dallas and their friendship picked up exactly where it left off, almost. The romantic feelings in the relationship sparked, but were now with Tara who realized that she loved Tag and wanted to spend the rest of her life with him. In 2005 Tag, a teacher at Prestonwood Christian Academy in Plano, went to New York City to do mission work. Tara, who is also a teacher, watched him leave without telling him her feelings. It wasn’t until they were on a mission trip together in 2007 that they both, for the first time, felt they were going to spend the rest of their lives together. In October 2007, Tara and Tag went on their first date and the relationship progressed quickly with both of them sure that they were dating to marry. But when, Tara wondered, would Tag propose? They had been off and on, disconnected and separated for more than a decade and she did not want another lengthy time lapse before they became engaged.

She needn’t have feared. In February 2008 Tag gave Tara and some of her friends a massage package to enjoy while on a little road trip. The real surprise was when the massage was over. Tara and her friends walked out of the spa and across the street to a cliff. Looking over the rise Tara saw the ground covered with rose petals and candles. Music was playing. She walked over for a closer look and saw pictures of Tag and her together and realized what was happening. Tag had left a sign telling her to take it all in because this is the moment that she (and he) had been waiting for. Tag then came to the site and knelt on one knee and, with engagement ring in hand, proposed. Without hesitation, Tara said “yes.”

Last August, after more than a decade-long roller coaster relationship, Tag and Tara married. Just as Tag knew they would when their friendship first began.

Brittany Cordon is a 2008-09 Frisco STYLE Magazine intern who lives in Frisco.