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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Cheyenne— Wyoming marriages and stepfamilies got a step up this week when Faith Initiatives of Wyoming (FIWY) was awarded a five year Level 3 Marriage Grant from the US Department of Health and Human Services to strengthen Wyoming Stepfamilies. Project partners for the Building Strong Wyoming Stepfamilies grant are Wyoming Department of Family Services, Wyoming Department of Health, Wyoming Association of Consumer Science Teachers, Catholic Diocese of Cheyenne, Wyoming Parent Education Network, Wyoming Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, Highland Park Community Church in Casper, Father Factor of Cheyenne, Yellowstone Behavioral Institute of Cody, Ray Lansing, Inc and Full Spectrum of Cheyenne, and our five regional Marriage Coalitions.

“This is a great opportunity to support Wyoming step families and second marriages,” said Executive Director Kathleen Kelley of Faith Initiatives of Wyoming. Couples and families will have the opportunity to receive marriage preparation, enrichment and divorce reduction services for second marriages and stepfamilies through both faith-based and community-based organizations.

The statistics speak for themselves. Wyoming has the 5th highest divorce rate in the nation; 54% of all marriages occurring annually in WY are second marriages; second marriages fail at a significantly higher rate than first marriages and 75% of couples divorcing remarry within 2 years. Wyoming’s out of wedlock birth rates have climbed from 19% in 1998 to 30% in 2004. If these and other trends continue, more than 60% of Wyoming’s children could be living in a single parent or stepfamily home environment within five years.

“The Wyoming Smart Stepfamilies Program is designed to meet these problems head-on and take action to help our marriages and stepfamilies succeed,” explained Kelley. “By this time next year we plan to have in place 105 statewide information sites, an interactive website and toll free information/referral system, and a Healthy Marriage Stepfamily newsletter for faith and community organizations.” Wyoming Smart Stepfamilies will enhance the service capabilities of Wyoming’s five Marriage Coalitions, therapeutic counselors, teachers, and community/ faith marriage service providers and equip them to deliver selected curricula in their local communities, according to Kelley. Marriage preparation, enrichment, divorce reduction and parenting programs will be made available to approximately 1,250 of Wyoming’s couples and/or stepfamilies considering or in second marriages.

“We are honored that out of hundreds of applications the federal government received Wyoming was awarded this funding and now has the opportunity to make a significant impact in promoting successful marriages and stepfamilies. We look forward to working with our grant partners to really make a difference,” Kelley said.

For more information on Wyoming Smart Stepfamilies log onto www.fiwy.org.