

Hello, everyone –

This month, I am including for you a template given to us by a journalist, who happens to be on the Cincinnati team. This is for your team to use to try to get a feature article about your Beginning Experience team into a local newspaper or a Catholic newspaper.

Carefully read her instructions below and see if you can get a ‘feature’ or, at least a ‘brief’ into the paper.

Thank you!

I am placing this on the team section of the logon section of the website under the heading ‘Getting the Word Out’ as well.

Instructions for publicity chairs:

Note: This is a general feature you can share with your local newspapers and diocesan papers (if you have them).

1. Fill in all the nitty-gritty information (the facts about the weekend and your local contact information; this is everything highlighted in yellow).
2. Get a quotation from a person on your board.
3. Work with a local parish priest or one from the archdiocesan office who is supportive of Beginning Experience and get a quotation about how helpful the ministry is. (A quotation from a parish priest or from the diocesan office gives evidence that our ministry is supported/endorsed by the diocese, which is important to some people and “legitimizes” us to an extent.)
4. Get the name and direct email of an editor or reporter at the publication to which you’re pitching it. Then, follow up with the person by phone, checking back to see if you can be of assistance in connecting them with anyone they want to interview. If they don’t have room for a feature, ask them if they can convert it into a brief.
5. If they ask for a shorter story, cut out the history, Yvonne’s quotations and the second sidebar (keep all the local stuff); convert the registration and contact information from the first sidebar into one sentence and place it at the end of the article. Here’s a sample of a last paragraph:
The retreat runs Friday night through Sunday afternoon, Oct. 23-25, at the Comboni Mission Center, 1318 Nagel Road, Anderson. The cost of \$175 includes lodging, meals and retreat materials. Register at beginningexperiencecincinnati.webs.com. For information, email becincinnati@fuse.net or call 513-684-1196.

PRESS RELEASE

Beginning Experience (CITY OR CHAPTER NAME)

IMMEDIATE RELEASE: (DATE)

Contact: (NAME, EMAIL, PHONE NUMBER)

Upcoming weekend focuses on healing for the widowed and divorced

For (NUMBER OF YEARS; IF IT'S CLOSE TO A MILESTONE, SAY "ALMOST XX YEARS") years, a peer ministry in (CITY NAME) called Beginning Experience has been helping separated, widowed and divorced men and women in the (CITY NAME) area to grieve, heal, forgive and move forward.

The group's next retreat is (DATE) at (NAME OF RETREAT CENTER) in (CITY NAME). The ecumenical program is open to anyone who has experienced the loss of a love relationship through death, divorce or separation.

"Every facilitator has been through the loss of a spouse and has experienced the healing of a Beginning Experience weekend," said (MEMBER NAME), (OFFICE TITLE) of the (CITY) chapter and a member of (PARISH NAME) Parish in (CITY). "(ONE OR TWO SENTENCES FROM OFFICER ABOUT HIS OR HER EXPERIENCE ON THE WEEKEND ... such as "The weekend I went on in March 2011 was a turning

point in my life. I didn't know where to turn, but I knew I didn't want to keep living my life feeling so hurt, angry, judged and lonely. A friend recommended the BE weekend, and I thought, 'What could it hurt?'"

The weekend helped (LAST NAME OF PERSON IN PREVIOUS PARAGRAPH) to see that all the feelings that accompanied the loss of (HER/HIS) 17-year marriage were normal — but (HE/SHE) wanted to feel happiness again.

Sister Josephine Stewart, S.S.M.N., a family counselor at the Catholic Renewal Center in Fort Worth, Texas, held the first Beginning Experience weekend in 1974 with her divorced friend Jo Lamia; the (CHAPTER NAME) chapter held its first weekend in (YEAR OF CHAPTER'S FIRST WEEKEND). Today, the organization has 42 chapters in the United States and Canada, along with seven in England and Ireland and four in Australia, New Zealand and Singapore, said BE International's executive director, Yvonne Stoops, who went through her first BE weekend in 2005.

“I didn’t find Beginning Experience until I had been divorced nine years,” she said. “I was just telling someone the other day that when I got divorced, I didn’t think it would be as bad as it was. ... My emotional and spiritual life just plummeted to a degree for which I was not prepared. I was living — but not really engaged in a joyful way of living. I think it’s because I didn’t know that when you divorce, you grieve.”

The weekend acknowledged for Stoops that her divorce was a loss, much like a death.

“A lot of times in the divorce world, people don’t see it that way,” she said. “They say, ‘You wanted this.’ That’s not true, of course. ... But as a Catholic, I only thought I had one chance. The Beginning Experience weekend was a new start, and I’ve been surrounded by life-giving events ever since.”

(SUPPORTIVE PRIEST’S NAME HERE), pastor of **(PARISH NAME)** in **(CITY NAME)**, routinely encourages people to reach out to others when they’re going through difficult times such as the loss of a spouse. Peer ministry can be really effective, he said, noting the importance of healing from a loss before starting a new relationship.

After a death or a divorce, he said, many people try to “patch over” the wound of the loss with a new relationship, but until that wound is healed, a person can’t really be whole enough for it.

(QUOTATION HERE SUCH AS THIS) “Beginning Experience is a great way to start the healing,” he said.

SIDEBAR 1

BEGINNING EXPERIENCE WEEKEND INFORMATION

- **When:** Friday night through Sunday afternoon, **(DATES)**
- **Where:** **(NAME AND ADDRESS OF RETREAT CENTER)**
- **Who:** Anyone who has experienced the loss of a relationship through separation, death or divorce
- **Cost:** **(\$ INSERT COST HERE)** (includes lodging, meals, retreat materials)
- **Register:** **(INSERT REGISTRATION WEB ADDRESS IF APPLICABLE)**
- **Questions:** Email **(EMAIL ADDRESS)** or call **(INSERT PHONE WITH AREA CODE)**

SIDEBAR 2:

Ministry efforts multiplying

Yvonne Stoops, executive director of Beginning Experience International in Avon, Connecticut, said ministry for separated, widowed and divorced people has come a

long way since Beginning Experience started in 1973 — and even since Stoops' first weekend in 2005.

“It’s getting better and better,” she said. “More diocesan family life offices are totally on board with our peer ministry approach, and they work with me all the time. ... They are looking for programs. They are in line with the mission and would like for there to be more ways to reach out to divorced and widowed people. Pope Francis has been starting conversations, and a lot of bishops are working on our behalf. Even the Knights of Columbus organization is making a point to start more programs that are family-oriented for single-parent families. ... Yes it’s slow, but I feel extremely optimistic. We are at an exciting time — a turning point.”