

## **Valentine's brides, grooms to get gift**

**By Carla Hinton**  
***The Oklahoman***

Volunteers Marlene Glass and Millicent Gillogly make one of 50 gift baskets to be presented to couples getting married on Tuesday, Valentine's Day, at the Oklahoma County Courthouse. The basket giveaway is a project of Marriage Network Oklahoma and other community sponsors. A recipe for a "forever" marriage includes an abundance of faith.

So says an Oklahoma collaboration of ministry groups with a special gift for couples saying "I do" on Valentine's Day.

Marriage Network Oklahoma has prepared 50 gift baskets to give to couples getting married Tuesday at the Oklahoma County Courthouse.

Donna Edwards, one of the network's founders, said the baskets are being presented for a second year to put marriage enrichment resources into the hands of new marrieds.

"Our desire is to strengthen marriage in Oklahoma," she said.

"We see this as an opportunity to share a message of good will."

Edwards said each basket contains all the romantic bells and whistles that Valentine's Day is known for -- chocolates, sparkling juice, a picture album and more.

But the real bounty, she said, can be found in the other items there.

Edwards said each basket also contains a marriage devotional and four marriage enrichment compact discs from faith-based organizations, Family Life and Focus on the Family.

"We know that marriages don't succeed by accident. These are easy resources to use. Almost everyone has a CD player, and they can pop one of these in."

The baskets also contain a card with information about marriage resources such as the network's Web site, [www.marriagenetworkok.net](http://www.marriagenetworkok.net), and others.

Edwards said the card also includes financial tips for couples because studies indicate that financial woes can cause much strain in marriage.

About 35 baskets were given away to couples getting married on Valentine's Day 2005 at the courthouse.

"The couples were just very surprised and pleased," said Jim Priest, another network founder.

He said he had asked the county court clerk's office and the presiding judge of family court for permission to give the gifts to couples.

Edwards and Priest said they asked each newly married couple how long they expected to be married.

"Without hesitation, the woman would say 'Forever!'" We said, "That doesn't happen by accident, and there are things in this basket that will help you stay married'," Edwards said.

Said Priest: "There's material there that will help them have a 'forever' marriage."

Sponsors of the basket giveaway include the Oklahoma Family Policy Council, Family Life, Hobby Lobby, Marriage Works and Living Well Ministries.

Edwards said the Valentine's Day project is just one way Marriage Network Oklahoma can spread the message that marriage is sacred and important to God.

"We believe family and marriage is a high priority for our culture and our state," she said.

"We know that God places high value on marriage."

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