

National media stunned by message of truth in love

As the nation wrestles with the hot-button issues of sexuality and marriage, deluged by name-calling and insult, Bob Vander Plaats and The FAMiLY LEADER are leading the way in forging a *civil* dialogue instead.

And national newspapers are starting to take notice.

For Christians, standing firm for what we believe while caring for those who don't believe the same is our God-given duty, the convergence of Philippians 2:3 – “in humility value others above yourselves” – and Ephesians 4:15 – “speaking the truth in love.”

For the press, however, it's nothing short of shocking.

In [an article written by the Washington Post](#) and subsequently picked up by the Houston Chronicle and other outlets nationwide, reporter Robert Samuels observed Vander Plaats and homosexual activist Donna Red Wing of One Iowa not only publicly debate their stances on the issue of marriage, but also publicly profess a genuine friendship:

Vander Plaats's organization, The Family Leader, has derided same-sex marriages such as Red Wing's as "unnatural." Red Wing, leader of the LGBT rights group One Iowa, has [formerly] called Vander Plaats "bigoted" and "cruel."

But when they ran into each other on the day the Supreme Court declared that same-sex couples could marry anywhere in the country, crossing paths between dueling interviews at a local TV station studio, they locked eyes.

And then they hugged.

The news reporter marveled: "I just saw something I never thought I'd see."

Bob and Donna's unusual friendship has garnered attention before, in [a Des Moines Register piece](#), [on WHO-TV](#), and when the two discussed the importance of creating a civil dialogue before students [at Drake University](#).

[Click here now to watch video clips from Bob and Donna's meeting at Drake.](#)

But it was a lunch forum organized by The Wallace Centers of Iowa last month that caught nationwide attention. Samuels was on hand to witness Bob and Donna explain how they've managed to form a friendship – and a civil dialogue – despite being leading opponents on one of the nation's most contentious issues:

Vander Plaats saw the event, taking place before a heavily liberal audience, as an opportunity. He believed he could win over the group with his humor and humanity and convince attendees that he was neither scary nor villainous. ...

Both Vander Plaats and Red Wing appreciated the oddity of the moment, bantering like talk show hosts.

“I actually like Bob Vander Plaats,” Red Wing said.

“I love Donna,” Vander Plaats said.

“If any Christian says, ‘I can hate Donna,’ run from them,” he added. “So when Donna opened up this thing about would you like to have coffee, the only thing I felt bad about is I hadn’t extended the invitation first.”

In a culture where protest signs and sneering labels scream across the front page, The FAMiLY LEADER is working to model a different approach: A discussion of ideas that is both free and open, precisely because it is civil and others-honoring.

Samuels commented:

In Iowa, where the courts legalized same-sex marriage in 2009, Red Wing and Vander Plaats were early to adjust to this new dynamic. The two say they have formed a genuine friendship over coffee dates and phone calls that has fundamentally changed how their organizations interact.

No more calling Vander Plaats a “hater” or a “bigot,” Red Wing insisted at her group. Treat them with love, Vander Plaats said he constantly reminded his staff.

“There are times when I ask myself, before I put an idea out there, ‘How would Donna receive this?’ Because I love her,” Vander Plaats said.

Then he added: “Not that I’m changing my beliefs.”

At The FAMiLY LEADER, we believe in firmly standing on the truth of God’s Word. That’s why we also believe in speaking that truth in love. The two *must* work together (1 Cor. 13:1) if we’re to see a revived America that once again honors God and blesses people.

[Support the work of The FAMiLY LEADER today. Click here to encourage The FAMiLY LEADER to continue proclaiming God’s design for the family and marriage in the spirit of truth and love.](#)