

Central Virginia Restorative Justice

Newsletter Fall 2005

Notes From the Coordinator

A New Court, New Capacity, and a Conference

Normally growth comes in the spring, but for us at Central Virginia Restorative Justice we are pleased to say that growth and opportunity are with us in the summer, fall and winter as well.

This past summer we began a new program in the Charlottesville General District Court; this fall we expand our program's capacity with the addition of Jennifer Larson-Sawin to our staff; and this winter the Restorative Justice Association of Virginia will bring their second annual conference to Charlottesville (*See related articles*).

These are exciting developments that speak to the growing understanding and awareness of the positive role that restorative justice principles and practices can play in our community's response to crime.

The program in the General District Court was years in the making and the product of committed and dedicated work on the part of committee members. Special

thanks go out to Judge Robert Downer, J.D. Beard, Ross Carew, Dave Chapman, Eddie Howard, Albie LaFave, Joe Platania,



*Restorative
Justice
Coordinator
David Saunier*

Pat Smith and Tom Von Hemert. This program would not be possible without the hard work of these dedicated people.

And speaking of dedicated people, Jennifer Larson Sawin has now joined the staff at Central Virginia Restorative Justice. Jennifer has shown a long-time commitment to restorative justice and social justice issues. The program's capacity to take cases from both the Charlottesville and Albemarle Juvenile and Domes-

has been enhanced. We are pleased to welcome her to the program.

This December Charlottesville will welcome the 2nd Annual Restorative Justice Conference. This is a convenient opportunity for all in our area to learn more about RJ and to meet others who are doing such work in the state. Please see the newsletter article to learn more.

We see growth and opportunity are with us all year long. This program is growing because of support from people like you. You have helped make this progress possible. For this we say... "Thank you."

New Program Launched in City General District Court

Program serves adult offenders and their victims, assists offenders in meeting obligations, and addresses victim and community needs

In June of 2005 after 2 years of planning, Central Virginia Restorative Justice began accepting case referrals from the Charlottesville General District Court. This unique program serves repeat offenders who have consistently returned to court and are confronted with possible incarceration and also offers support to the victim(s) and community that have been affected by these offences. Cooperation among the judge, prosecutors, public defenders, OAR and CVRJ make this program possible.

"We are pleased that the local system recognizes the benefit of the restorative justice approach and is open to expanding to adult cases," said David Saunier, CVRJ Coordinator. Previously CVRJ offered services only to juveniles but with the implementation of the GDC program, adults can now utilize the programs and services offered through CVRJ.

The program uses an exciting blend of restorative justice principles and Evidence Based Practices (EBP). EBP is a diagnostic tool to identify recidivism risk and those factors that need to be addressed to reduce that risk. Restorative justice *Continued on page 2...*

Governor's Task Force Recommends Restorative Justice

On March 22, Governor Mark Warner's Task Force on Preventing Crime in Minority Communities recommended the use of restorative justice programs to lower crime and recidivism rates in minority communities.

Governor Warner's 22 member multi-cultural task force was established in July 2003 and was comprised of professional leaders and concerned citizens. The task force was created for developing and recommending strategies to reduce crime in minority communities; preventing crimes against minorities; and identifying strategies and programs in Virginia, and nationally, that have proven effective in preventing crime in minority communities. One reason for the creation of the task force was that overall crime rates *Continued on page 3...*

General District Court, continued...

helps build social bonds between the community and offender. The two approaches complement each other to form a program which aids repeat offenders by helping them end the re-offending cycle.

A grant from the Edward Byrne Memorial Grant Program through the

Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services has made the implementation of this new adult program possible. The grant program supports programs which focus on community oriented justice, crime prevention, and improving the criminal justice system and drug control and treatment.

Restorative Justice Conference comes to Charlottesville: December 5th 2005

In early December, Charlottesville will host a conference bringing together people from all parts of the commonwealth including probation officers, lawyers, counselors, psychologists, police officers, social workers, mediators and school resource officers. The keynote speaker will be Dr. Howard Zehr, a Professor of Sociology and Restorative Justice at the Center for Justice and Peacebuilding at Eastern Mennonite University.

Dr. Zehr is considered to be one of the founders of the contemporary restorative justice movement. He has traveled extensively throughout the world to lecture, consult and train as well as working as a photojournalist. He has written multiple books including *Changing Lenses: A New Focus for Crime and Justice* which is considered the seminal work in restorative justice in the United States. Other titles include *Doing Life: Reflections of Men and Women Serving Life Sentences*, *Transcending: Reflections of Crime Victims*, and *The Little Book of Restorative Justice*, which has also been translated into Spanish.

The conference is hosted by the Restorative Justice Association of Virginia (RJAV). The RJAV is comprised of practitioners, criminal justice professionals, victim's advocates, offender advocates and citizens. RJAV's mission is to provide leadership, support and advocacy for restorative justice principles within Virginia's justice system, schools, and communities.

Topics discussed at the workshop will cover an array of issues that affect all aspects of a community. Topics to be covered include: restorative justice



"Restorative justice is NOT: the opposite of retribution; primarily about forgiveness; a particular program; new or an American development."

~ Dr. Howard Zehr, keynote speaker

processes in schools, restorative justice in cases of juvenile/adult sexual offences, victim impact classes and panels, restorative justice as a tool for community empowerment, re-entry issues for juveniles, cases of family violence, Evidence Based Practices and restorative justice, and skills workshops for the practitioner.

This conference will be an exciting opportunity for community members, to learn more about the field and its potential for wide application.

2005 Restorative Justice Conference

**December 5, 2005
8:45-4:30**

**Holiday Inn Conference Center
Charlottesville**

**For more information visit
RJAV.ORG**

We don't accomplish anything in this world alone ... and whatever happens is the result of the whole tapestry of one's life and all the weavings of individual threads from one to another that creates something.

~ Sandra Day O'Conner

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Program Snapshot:

Central Virginia Restorative Justice currently accepts cases referred from Charlottesville and Albemarle Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court and the General District Court.

Cases referred to the program thus far include assault and battery, auto theft, fraud, shoplifting, petit larceny, trespassing and disorderly conduct.

In each case that has progressed to a Support and Accountability Conference, victim and offender have agreed upon a plan for the offender to address the harm caused by his/her actions to victim(s) and the community.

Governor's Task Force, continued...

have decreased in the past 12 years in Virginia, but this decrease did not occur in minority communities. "If crime is common in minority communities, then victims are common, as well. Restorative justice focuses more attention to victim restoration than any other community-based correctional programs." P43

The task force held four community forums throughout the state to gather information and opinions from various community leaders and citizens on ways to reach the goal of reducing crime.

In addition the task force recommended that the Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) provide grant

"Particularly in those communities that have been distrustful of the police and lack faith in the justice system, the restorative justice model can yield benefits of increased trust and collaboration, as well as have direct impact on reducing crime." p. 43

funding for new pilot restorative justice programs for adults and for juveniles, as well as to fund successful existing programs. On page 42 of the report it says that the restorative justice model "incorporates the principles of accountability, community protection, competency development, and balance." The task force also set forth recommendations of expanding ESL and GED programs, implementing drug courts in each judicial district, among others.

We are pleased with to see others recognizing the role that restorative justice principles can play in building healthy communities!

New Employee Joins Staff

We are pleased to announce the expansion of our staff with the addition of a half time employee. At CVRJ, we are excited to have Jennifer Larson Sawin joining us. She will be involved with assisting in juvenile cases, facilitating support and accountability conferences, grant writing and program promotion.

Jennifer brings many different skills and interests to the program that are significant assets. She has been long dedicated and involved in social and restorative justice. She received her MA in Conflict Transformation with an emphasis in Restorative Justice from East-



International Restorative Justice Week

The week of November 13-19 is International Restorative Justice Week which started in 1996. RJ Week includes all people who have been affected by crime, from individuals to entire communities.

Countries all over the world participate in RJ Week. RJ Week helps promote and create public awareness about restorative justice and the role that it can play in making a community safe and healthy.

ern Mennonite University's Center for Justice and Peacebuilding.

Jennifer has lived and traveled extensively abroad, and has worked in a variety of fields which promises to bring fresh perspectives. She worked in Northern Ireland with the Restorative Justice Ireland Network in a listening project. As an intern at the Carter Presidential Center in Atlanta, GA she aided in the hosting of a peace conference.

She became interested in pursuing restorative justice when one day in class

What Role Does the Community Play?

The community, and its members are highly valued in a restorative justice approach to crime. There are a number of important roles that members of the community can play...

- Volunteer as a facilitator of Support and Accountability Conferences
- Participate in conferences as a member of the neighborhood. Speaking about the effects of the criminal behavior on the neighborhood shows victims community support and shows offenders that their actions have far reaching effects that they often don't recognize
- Provide support for victims as they begin to recover from the effects of the crime
- Provide support for offenders as they meet their obligations to the victims and the community
- Serve on committees or advisory boards of the program
- Participate in local neighborhood committees that develop community service projects for offenders to meet their obligations to the community. These will be projects that help meet a particular community need because they are identified by the neighborhood. If possible they will relate directly to repairing the harm that the offender has caused.

Dr. Howard Zehr, the "grandfather of restorative justice," sat next to her and engaged her in conversation. Dr. Zehr, she describes, is an "intoxicating character" that "sparked" her interest in RJ.

After "studying restorative justice in an intellectual way and with academic understanding," Jennifer is looking forward to get a "chance to feel it in [her] bones; to see what it looks like."

We look forward to working with Jennifer and we welcome her to Central Virginia Restorative Justice.

Feedback

"The [Support and Accountability] Conference was powerful. It was one of the greatest experiences I have had in seeing wrongs made right. It allowed the offenders to give back to the community and understand better what it means to be in community. I've watched these young men since then and I've seen great things come from it."

-Community Member

Restorative Justice Principles at a Glance

Restorative Justice is a set of principles more than a program or process. We provide a brief look below at our program's understanding of those principles:

- **Crime is a violation of people and relationships.**
- **Crime creates harms, needs, and obligations.** The victim(s) and community have been harmed and have certain needs. Offenders have a direct obligation to victims and the community to address those harms and meet those needs. The community has an obligation to support victims in their healing and to support offenders in meeting their obligations.
- **An effective justice process should meaningfully include the parties most affected by the crime.** All are given a voice to express their needs as they see them.
- **Crime is a tear in the fabric of community.** Justice should seek to repair that tear and rebuild healthy relationships and communities. Healthy communities produce less crime and wrongdoing.

Tell Us What You Think!

Please share with us your views on this newsletter. We wish to be accountable and responsive to the community in all aspects of our work. Are there things you would like to see included or deleted?

Also, let us know if you wish to be dropped from our mailing list, or know someone who would like to be added. Thanks!

Statistical Review

Central Virginia Restorative Justice works to build a safe respectful community by providing a justice process that respects and empowers victims, and provides offenders an opportunity to make direct reparations to their victims in a supporting, caring, and respectful environment. We are pleased with the results of the program and report the following statistics:

- **Locally, 100% of cases that have gone through a Support and Accountability Conference have reached an agreement.**
- **The obligations set forth in these agreements have been fully satisfied in 84% of cases.**
- **The recidivism rate among offenders who have participated in our conferences is only 15.8%.**

**International Restorative Justice Week
November 13-19, 2005**

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22903