

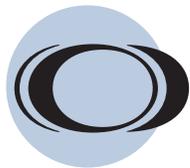
Face-to-Face Public Spaces

Reflective Community Dialog Helps Create New Community Standards

By Kay Pranis

“Face to face one tries to find one’s better nature - because one can see the soul”

-Andre Codrescu



One of the most important contributions made by restorative justice programs is the creation of “public spaces” in which questions of our expectations of one another and our feelings about those expectations being violated can be spoken and heard. Beyond the questions of a particular crime, this “public space” opens up possibilities for dialog about larger community issues and the development of shared understandings about boundaries on behavior that everyone can live with and commit to.

Loss of Widely Accepted Community Standards

For hundreds of years community standards for behavior were passed to succeeding generations through interaction between adults and children in the community and change in those standards was slow. Conformity to those standards was enforced through both informal social mechanisms (for instance, gossip and social exclusion operated to send messages about expected behavior and the consequences of failure to comply), as well as by the law.

Because some of the prevailing standards enforced by communities were racist, sexist and classist, and had nothing to do with the well being

of others or the community as a whole, the rebellion of the sixties and seventies overthrew many existing informal social control mechanisms, turning to more reliance on legal mechanisms for those standards that are essential for safe and fair communities.

After 25 years of relying on legal mechanisms, it is very clear that legal standards are not sufficient to create healthy, ethical community behavior. The legal system is too distant from daily life to be effective as a reminder of our obligations to one another. It is too complicated and abstract for citizens to feel they are a part of setting those standards or have any responsibility to clarify or enforce standards in the community. And because it involves coercion and deprivation of liberty, the legal system can only set minimum standards of behavior. Processes that encourage cooperation and voluntary engagement can establish standards for maximum behavior.

So, we overthrew the community standards of the fifties, and we have learned that we cannot have strong, healthy communities without some boundaries on behavior based on shared values and shared commitment to the well being of all. How do

we construct a new set of standards that will not bring back the oppressive excesses of the past and will respect differences in culture, lifestyle and beliefs that do not harm others? Achieving that goal requires community dialog that is both extensive and continuous.

Every point of view needs to be in the dialog, and there can never be a final set of boundaries. It must always be open to change as knowledge and capacity grow. It was the failure of communities in the fifties to respond to changing understandings of equity and fairness and new information about the limitations of punishment as an effective strategy for managing behavior that triggered the massive social movements of the sixties that dismantled many prevailing community norms.

Because those norms were passed down from generation to generation without question, communities did not have in place a mechanism for creating a new set of norms to fit the new knowledge and understandings. Consequently, a period of ‘every man for himself’ ensued. There is now a resurgence of interest in the common good and in the need for mutual responsibility for each other and for our collective welfare.

See **Face to Face** on page 10

Kay Pranis is the Restorative Justice Planner for the Minnesota Department of Corrections. She can be reached at 651/642-0321 or e-mail her at kpranis@co.doc.state.mn.us

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VOMA Connections

VOMA Connections is published by the International Victim Offender Mediation Association. VOMA's mission is:

To provide inspiration, leadership and information-sharing in the development and support of various models of justice which create opportunities for dialogue between victims, offenders, and their communities for the purpose of healing and restoration.

VOMA welcomes contributions, including short articles, literature reviews, case studies, program news and other interesting info. Photos and graphics are also welcome. Views expressed within the VOMA Connections are those of the authors and not necessarily those of VOMA.

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Send submissions to co-editors Beverly Moore or Ann Warner Roberts (See Board of Directors listing at right for contact information).

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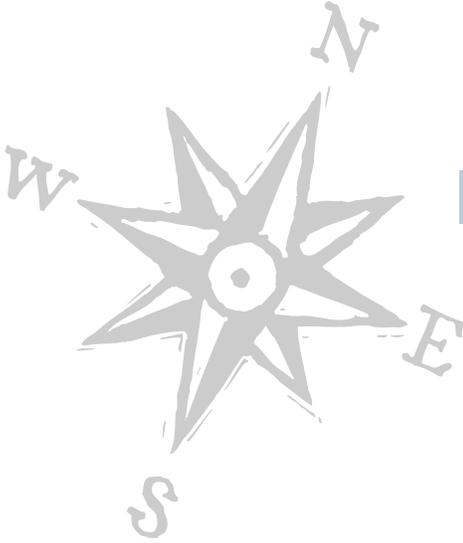
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VOMA by Region

VOMA has developed regional networks to better serve its members. Following is the United States, Canada and the world divided into seven Regions. After each Board member's name in the Directory on the preceding page, the assigned Region is listed. For information on issues of interest to VOMA members, please contact one of your Regional Board Representatives.

Region I

Saskatchewan, Manitoba, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, and Minnesota

Region II

Wisconsin, Iowa, Missouri, Illinois, Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, West Virginia, Kentucky, and Tennessee

Region III

Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, and Washington, D.C.

Region IV

Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Florida

Region V

Arkansas, Louisiana, Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, Colorado, New Mexico, and Arizona

Region VI

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Region VII

Newfoundland,
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Welcome to New Members

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Join VOMA On-line with Web-page and Listserve

VOMA has three different ways members can electronically communicate and acquire information using e-mail and the internet:

1. VOMA maintains a web site at www.voma.org. The web site contains information on the Association, upcoming training and conferences, current and past issues of VOMA newsletters, and links to related sites.

2. VOMA provides a list-serve, intended to provide a medium for networking and sharing of relevant information, resources, and diverse ideas. The VOMA list-serve is a benefit for members only. The list-serve is an e-mail-based discussion group in which list-serve subscribers receive messages sent to all subscribers. This forum allows for the discussion of issues related to victim offender mediation/ conferencing, restorative justice, and activities of VOMA. There are approximately 50 members signed up on the list-serve. To send a response to the entire list-serve, simply click on "reply." to the e-mail. To subscribe to the VOMA list-serve, send an e-mail to duanerh@fresno.edu with the message: subscribe VOMA list.

3. VOMA offers members with e-mail addresses the opportunity to receive announcements and information from the Association and Board of Directors via e-mail. To subscribe to the e-mail announcement list send e-mail to duanerh@fresno.edu with the message: subscribe VOMA e-mail announcement list.

VOMA 2000 Activities Include Strategic Planning and Training Institute & Conference

The Co-Chair Corner

by David Doerfler and Kathy Elton
Board Co-Chairs

We began this year's VOMA Board of Directors Mid-Year Meeting in Pennsylvania with a meditation from Melody Beattie's *The Language of Letting Go* entitled "In-Between." Perhaps all of the VOMA family can find identification and perspective in some of Beattie's words:

"Sometimes to get from where we are to where we are going we have to be in-between..."

VOMA has been graced with a tremendous opportunity for growth through the Hewlett Foundation grant. It is just that: an opportunity. There are no guarantees with many unknowns, some risks, and a lot of hard work ahead of us. But we cannot help but feel hopeful if not downright confident in our journey together.

"To prepare ourselves for the new we need to first let go of the old..."

The mission of VOMA is clear and our value-based practices remain strong. But our challenge is to be open to the change that will further clarify and strengthen the heart of that mission and those values. Our task is to encourage each of us to think and feel and do "outside the box."

We hope you will be exhilarated by that which is already in the process of being implemented:

- A strategic plan has been established under the competent guidance of Gary Stern and Assoc. (including Gary Stern, Barbara Reye and Tom Olsen).
- An election to fill five Board of Directors positions is in progress. The results will be announced soon.
- A VOMA Membership Survey will be sent in July. The survey is a critical mechanism for

you to provide direct input regarding your needs that will guide VOMA's goals and objectives.

- A plan has begun to strengthen the administrative and financial structure of VOMA including determining the feasibility of a salaried executive director.

"Being in between isn't (always) fun, but it's necessary. It will not last forever. It may feel like we're standing still but we're not. We're standing at the in-between place. It's how we get from here to there. It's not the destination..."

This is the journey of VOMA. It's exciting, and we need you as partners in the journey. Trust the process. Be a part of the process.

Please Join Us at VOMA's 17th Annual International Training Institute & Conference



Photos courtesy of Greater Minneapolis Convention & Visitors Association

This year's Conference and Training Institute will be held in Minnetonka, Minnesota, 10 miles west of downtown Minneapolis. The Conference site is near beautiful Lake Minnetonka (left). Evenings near the water will provide great views of Minneapolis' city lights (center). "Spoonbridge and Cherry" by Claes Oldenburg is the signature piece for the outside Minneapolis Sculpture Garden, adjacent to Walker Art Center and Guthrie Theater (right).

This year, Minnesota will be hosting VOMA's 17th Annual International Training Institute and Conference titled "Innovate Practices in Restorative Justice and Victim Offender Processes."

At the Institute and Conference, in-depth trainings and workshops will give participants a rich variety of victim, offender and community sensitive processes that will challenge and provide new ideas that measure up to the Conference theme.

The Institute and Conference Committee is planning on 350 participants this year (twice as many as last year). For conference brochure and registration information contact Bill Preston by e-mail: voma@voma.org, or call 904/424-1591. Conference brochure and registration are available on-line at: www.voma.org

Colorado Community Survey A Pathway to Restorative Practices

Survey results are useful for community presentations, grant writing, and the development of a VOM Program

By Peg Christian

Those who study restorative justice (RJ) often hear that the philosophy and practices must not be mandated in a top-down manner. RJ veterans understand this logic, but how then do we engage our community, neighborhood, or region without imposing our “wish list” upon them?

Though we may consider ourselves experts in our field, the genuine experts live out in the world of the public. These experts have been victimized, have harmed others, and must daily cope with the challenge of living with each other in a social setting. We too are members of the community and thus experts in our own right, but when approaching the public wearing our “official” hat, may become the “other.” The new role of the official in restorative justice is that of servant and resource provider.

Early in 1998 I began volunteer work at the Sixth Judicial Probation Department as an intern from Fort Lewis College. My specific assignment was to design, conduct and analyze a community survey of the three-county judicial district. The probation department requested an assessment of residents’ attitudes towards the current criminal j

Peg Christian is the Community Resource Liaison for the Sixth Judicial District Probation Department in Durango, Colorado. She is a restorative justice trainer for the State of Colorado Probation Department and the National Institute of Corrections. Peg’s passion is peacemaking, and she hopes to someday work in a setting of radical prison reform.

ustice system and possible restorative alternatives. Lacking experience as a researcher, and definitely not an expert, I relied solely on the energy, wit and intelligence displayed by community members.

One can drive the Sixth Judicial District in a long day, if the mountain passes are not blocked with snow or covered with the orange cones of highway construction. The district is populated by Southern Utes, Anglos, Hispanics and Latinos, Navajos, and a sprinkling of other ethnic groups of a variety of social and economic standings. Our smallest town has about 400 residents, and

Durango boasts a population of 14,000, though the county has 40,000 residents. We are rural in orientation, and rely heavily on the tourism industry.

Searching for other surveys and reports, I found information from Vermont, Iowa, Minnesota and New Zealand. After careful study, I collaborated with several professors from my college and we came up with a plan. The first step was to write a basic research design that detailed the varying aspects of the plan. We decided to mail out a questionnaire for our quantitative portion, and to interview focus groups and individual probationers to provide the “meat” we believed necessary to complete the study.

To Be or Not to Be

An emerging principle in restorative justice says that qualitative information, or the telling of stories, may have a value greater than that of lifeless numbers resulting from quantitative studies.

However, we had our foot in both worlds - both criminal justice system officials and non-professional community members needed results reported in a fashion useful to both, and so we utilized both methods of information gathering.

I enjoyed the scientific, mathematical aspect of gathering results, entering data, and exploring the questionnaires, but my passion became listening to the stories told by the focus group participants. Though we wanted to remain impartial, we arrived at our destinations with our biases, manifested in the careful manner in which we asked the questions. Our respondents, however, consistently took us to their important issues, and we took on the lessons.

What They Said

Residents believe that crime is increasing (78.2 percent), despite contrary evidence. They told us about the loss of trust and the consequent fear of each other, even where they had lived since birth. “I’m afraid of growing old in this society,” said one respondent. Many blamed media sources for their fearful perceptions.

Only 34.5 percent of questionnaire respondents felt that the current criminal justice system in their county is effective. Cumbersome and inconvenient processes characterize the current system, and many who had experienced the process (either as a victim or one who had harmed someone) seemed dissatisfied with the outcomes. Youthful offenders felt that the community “hated” them, and that they were “not really considered part of the community.” This is a measure of the alienation of our young people!

See Survey on page 10

The District is populated by Southern Utes, Anglos, Hispanics and Latinos, Navajos, and a sprinkling of other ethnic groups...”

Devastating Experience Leads Victim to Advocacy and Restorative Justice Profession

by Phyllis Turner-Lawrence

One pre-dawn January morning in 1989, my life changed. A stranger started to break into my apartment. As he came over the threshold, I lunged at him - screaming and scratching madly - and pushed him back into the hallway. He grabbed me and tossed me down the inside stairs. I landed at the base with my head in the corner and my legs flailing up the stairs. I screamed but there was no one near enough to hear. He started shoving my nightgown into my mouth, and as I struggled to breathe, I decided: "I am not going to die like this! I have too much to do!"

He had quickly overpowered me and I knew I couldn't continue fighting. I asked his name — trying to connect, human being to human being. He began sexually assaulting me at the bottom of the stairs, and then yanked me back up the stairs. I was bruised from the fall and got rug burns on my back from being hauled. He smashed my door in again and dragged me into my apartment. I was confused and scared as he vacillated between being furious and even courteous. But then he'd lose his temper and attack me again. This craziness and his strength made me too fearful of trying to get to the kitchen for a knife. When it was over, he asked me to drive him home! I pulled it together to do that, and that's how the police were able to catch him. For months, I focused on the trial and his conviction, while I suffered through the shame of the horrific physical and psychic violation of rape.

And I had to face the criminal justice system. I was a family and criminal defense lawyer, but in the courthouse, I felt like I had a big "R" on my forehead. At his trial, I wasn't in the position of influence I was used to. Here I was a victim, a witness, a non-player in the aftermath of one of the worst experiences of my life! This was my turf, but the D.A. wanted me to wait outside," so the jury won't keep watching you." Even with my

background, I kow-towed to the "expert." And my future safety was in the hands of 12 strangers. How must people totally unfamiliar with the court system ever feel any control?

He was found guilty. At sentencing, I had to give my Victim Impact Statement from behind the bar. He sat at the defense table with his back to me. That's the missing step in my journey of healing - being able to look him in the eye: "This is how you hurt me!" "What are you doing with your life?"

He's doing 48 years on 6 counts related to the sexual assault. In his prison, there's no therapy, no program, no opportunity for accountability or repair. What a waste of his life and taxpayers' money. What about the devastation to the truly ignored victims: the wife he battered and his 4 kids. I'm more than surviving, I'm thriving. What about all of them? At least I had my friends, the strong will my parents gave me, and my practice of Buddhism which enhanced my determination to survive and heal. I've reclaimed any power he had to hurt me - my definition of forgiveness.

However, the rawness and vulnerability I suffered led to a careful examination of my life and career. I shut down my law practice and came to Washington, D.C., to work for Ralph Nader. A great experience, but not my passion. I went to the ACLU Capital Punishment Project and was asked to examine "restorative justice." Although I'd never heard of it, as soon as I understood the concepts, I said: "I've discovered my mission in life!" And I know that I'm not the only one who's had that experience!

For the following 3 years I worked at the National Organization for Victim Assistance, learning so much more about the rights and injuries to crime victims. I was determined to focus all my

efforts on restorative justice and now I'm the Coordinator of the Prince William County (VA) Restorative Justice Program, where I have the privilege to help facilitate victim offender dialogues and run a victim impact program for juvenile offenders.

I shared my story at the Northern Virginia Crime Victim Tribute this year. The nationwide theme for Victim Rights Week this year is "Dare to Dream." In front of Virginia's Attorney General, many police chiefs and prosecutors, I added:

"I dream of a time where everyone, especially those in the criminal justice system, will be educated about trauma, so that victims will not be stigmatized by the 'professionals' or their own families and friends. I dream of a time where at least as much money goes into programs that help kids before they get into trouble, and that support both the healing of victims and supporting the accountability and increasing the competency of offenders as goes into the building and maintaining of prisons. I dream of a time where restorative practices - giving victims, offenders and the community the power and support to figure out for themselves what needs to be done to make things right - are the norm, not the 'alternative.'"

Phyllis can be contacted at 703-792-4073 or ptlawrence@pwcgov.org



Three Books For VOM and Restorative Justice Practitioners

Authors Provide Excellent Resources in Theory, Policy and Practice

VOM Publication Now Available from European Forum

“Victim-Offender Mediation in Europe, Making Restorative Justice Work” is an initiative of the European Forum for VOM and RJ. The publication is a result of the Forum’s first conference held in Belgium last year.

The book includes analysis of theoretical, legal, policy, ethical and societal aspects of VOM and RJ. Written by well-known scholars in the field, the book also includes overviews of VOM in eight European countries.

To order:

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Canadian Book Receives Widespread Acclaim from Restorative Justice Practitioners

Here’s a useful resource you may want to order—“Restorative Justice: A Vision for Healing and Change” by Susan Sharpe. The book sets out the core principles of restorative justice, examines its most common practices, and looks at key aspects of sound restorative justice programs.

The spiral-bound book was first published in 1998 as a help to communities in the Edmonton area. Since then, word-of-mouth has generated sales across North America and abroad, with consistent acclaim from restorative justice practitioners.



David Gustafson, Co-Director of Community Justice Initiatives, Langley, BC. Calls it “...one of the finest resources available to date.”

Howard Zehr, Professor of Sociology and Restorative Justice, and author of “Changing Lenses” says “Susan Sharpe’s handbook is great - probably the best around. I like the refreshing way that values and principles are articulated, their connection to implementation issues, and the concise summaries of issues and programs.”

David Moore, Director, Transformative Justice Australia says the book provides “...invaluable advice to anyone interested in the practicalities of justice reform.”

The book is proving useful to community programs in the delivery of restorative justice services, and to justice officials involved in policy and program review. It also is being used as a text in several Canadian and American University courses on restorative justice or conflict resolution.

The cost is \$24.95 Canadian, \$19.95 US.

To order contact:

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fax: 780-423-2467



New Publication Explores Applications of “Restorative Justice” Programming with Juvenile Offenders

Researchers from Australia, Europe and North America explore applications of “restorative justice” programming with juvenile offenders. Topics include: key principles; program ideas and practices; the effects on victims, offenders and the community; and future prospects. Contributors include: John Braithwaite, Barry Feld, Curt Taylor Griffiths, Susan Guarino-Ghezzi, Russ Immarigeon, Mara Schiff, Klaus Sessar, Mark Umbreit, Daniel Van Ness, Elmar Weitekamp and others.

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Thames Valley Police Facilitate Restorative Conferences

United Kingdom Case Studies Exemplify Victim Offender and Community Processes

by Ken Webster

Case Study One Property Damage

Following an evening out celebrating a friend's birthday, four young men, all age 16, were walking home, all having drunk a reasonable amount of alcohol. One of the four, John, threw some stones at a car parked nearby causing 150 pounds (\$250) worth of damage to it. Further along the same road, John picked up a concrete block and dropped it on another car causing 800 pounds (\$1400) worth of damage. All four then ran off, but were arrested by the police shortly afterwards. John admitted to the offenses, and as he had no previous offenses recorded against him, was recommended for a 'restorative caution.' (Thames Valley Police use a 'restorative caution' as a method to deal with a person as an alternative to going to court, in many cases using a restorative conference when it is considered to be the most effective for everyone concerned).

During interviews about the incident, both of the victims suggested they were interested in knowing more about taking part in a restorative conference. During pre-meetings with the victims, one decided to participate. The other victim, on learning that he would not be receiving full compensation from the offender, said he was uninterested.

The conference was held at a local police station. John came with his father and the 19-year-old victim, Tim, came by himself. Following introductions, John talked about what had happened that night and admitted damaging both

vehicles. John talked about what he had been thinking at the time, and described the flow of adrenaline that he had experienced. It was also made clear that he had been "egged on" by his friends. John then shared his feelings and said that he regretted what had happened. He then talked about how he had thought Tom had been affected, as well as his parents and himself.

Tim expressed his annoyance and anger because of the damage. He talked about the difficulties he had had in paying the money to have the car repaired, and described the inconvenience of arranging estimates and being without his car while it was being repaired. The conference facilitator (a police officer) then described the anger and frustration felt by the other victim not in attendance.

John's father then described his shame, anger and disappointment with his son's behavior, and how difficult it had been for him to discover his son had been in police custody.

John apologized to all concerned. When asked if there was anything he could do to repair the harm that he had caused, he offered to pay the entire amount to the victim who was present, and also 100 pounds (\$170) to the other victim to cover the excess that had not been paid on his insurance.

Refreshments were provided following the conference, during which Tim and John spoke about what had just happened, and also of careers, which ended in handshakes all around.

All monies have now been paid.

Case Study Two Theft and Property Damage

After a night of heavy drinking, Ian, age 19, broke into the primary school on the housing estate (public housing) he lived on. He was in the process

of stealing a number of items when he was arrested. In total, 235 pounds (\$400) of damage had been done to a window and other property.

Two weeks later the school was visited by a police officer from the restorative project, who asked the Head Teacher how the burglary had affected everybody. It was the first burglary to be experienced by the school, and the caretaker, Joan, in her mid 40s had been badly affected, and was now very concerned about being on the premises by herself. The school was also annoyed at having to pay for the damage from school funds.

Another week passed, and the police officer visited Ian at his home. It was clear that Ian's father was very strict with him, which recently was causing a great deal of tension between them. Ian reported that he would like to apologize to the school, and would take part in a restorative conference.

Several days later the conference was held at the school. Ian and his father were present, along with the Head Teacher and the caretaker. Following introductions, Ian began by apologizing unreservedly for his actions. The Head Teacher then talked about how the incident had affected the school, and how much money it would cost the school. Joan then spoke of her fears and concerns about being at the school by herself. Finally, Ian's father spoke of his own embarrassment and shame because of Ian's actions.

Ian offered to pay for the damage that had been done, and gave words of reassurance to Joan. Ian's father stated that as he lived nearby, he would be happy to attend the school at anytime Joan felt uneasy.

At this time, Ian has fully compensated the school, and Joan's fear of crime has been greatly reduced. The project also reported that the situation between Ian and his father had also improved.

Ken Webster, former Thames Valley Senior Police Officer, has been at the forefront of the development and training of Restorative Justice initiatives in the UK since 1994.

Restorative Justice and VOM Conferences and Trainings Calendar

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's (OJJDP's) national conference "**Justice for Children: A Vision for the 21st Century**" in Washington DC. OJJDP is sponsoring this 3-day national conference (plus 2 days of pre-conference workshops) to address critical issues in juvenile justice and delinquency and showcase responses and strategies for the future. December 10-11, 2000 (pre-conference workshops), December 12-14, 2000 (Conference).

To obtain the latest conference information contact the OJJDP website at www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org or to learn more about the conference and get on the mailing list for registration information, you also can contact the Juvenile Justice Clearinghouse at 800/638-8726 or send an e-mail to jjconf@ncjrs.org

If you won't be able to attend the conference, check the OJJDP web site for details on how you can view conference segments via satellite teleconference.

Tenth Annual International Symposium on Victimology "**Beyond Boundaries; Research and Action for the Third Millennium**," August 6-11, 2000, Pailais Des Congres de Montreal, Montreal (Quebec) Canada. For more information contact:

X International Symposium on Victimology
 1555 Peel Street, Suite 500
 Montreal, Quebec H3A 3L8 Canada
 tel: 514/287-1070
 Fax: 514/287-1248
www.victimology-2000.com

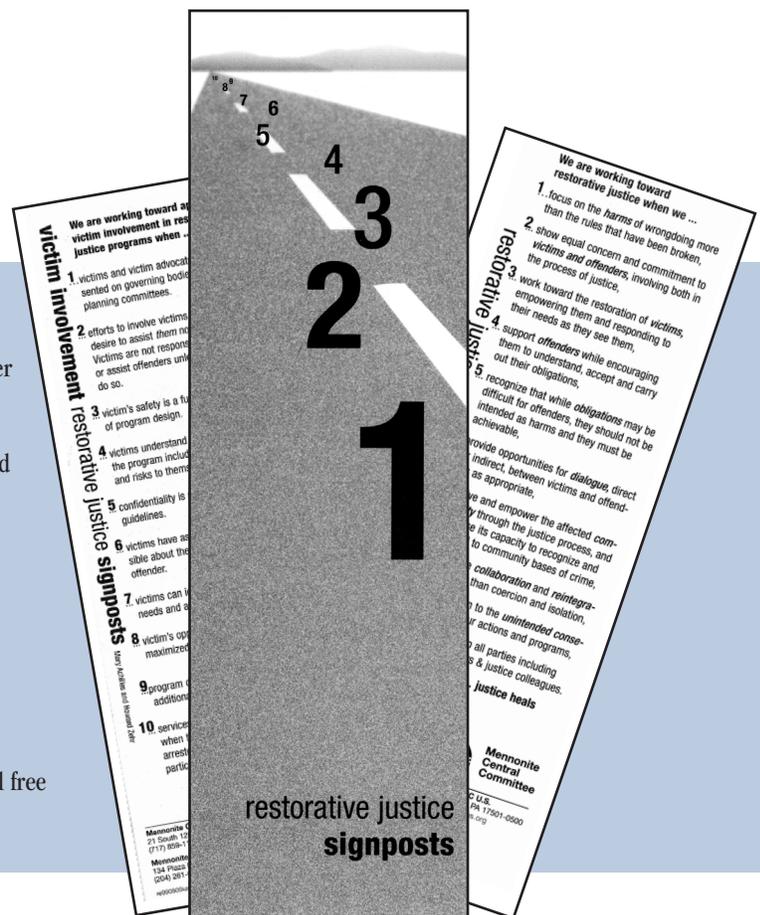
Victim Offender Mediation Association 17th Annual International Training Institute and Conference "**Innovative Practices in Restorative Justice and Victim Offender Processes**," September 12-16, 2000, in Minnetonka, Minnesota. For additional information contact:

VOMA
 143 Canal Street
 New Smyrna Beach, FL 32169
 tel: 904/424-1591
 e-mail: voma@voma.org
www.voma.org

Mennonite Central Committee, MCC U.S. and MCC Canada offer these bookmark "signposts" for restorative justice and victim involvement.

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“Each new practice has its roots in the results of the survey...”

Survey

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While a mere 27 percent of respondents felt they had a voice in the criminal justice system, 83.2 percent believed victims must be listened to throughout the process.

A majority of residents supported alternatives to straight jail time for non-violent offenders. Repairing harm to victims was important to 85 percent of respondents, 71.4 per cent agreed with rehabilitation, and 81.5 per cent thought community service important. One resident said that jail “causes more violence [and] makes for repeat offenders.”

In Retrospect

It was gratifying to realize that results analyzed in simple percentages could provide a foundation for the remarks of focus groups and probation clients. However, the comments themselves were the most important aspect of the survey, providing context, or the “why” for the statistics.

Two of us drove through winter mountain passes to meet with residents in their hometowns. They told us our presence made them feel their opinions were important. Many expressed surprise that we would go to such efforts to listen to their views. People gathered who had not seen each other for some time, although some lived within blocks of each other. We hope that a sense of community emerged from the focus group meetings.

We made sure that all residents of our district had access to the final report, and sent copies to central locations in outlying towns. The results were also released to available media sources, and reports remain available at the probation office window. The report has been sent all over the country, and I took it to New Zealand with me last November.

What Now?

We probably underestimated the value of the survey when we began. In retrospect, I have used the survey results in every presentation to the Kiwanis, Rotary, and other service clubs, at schools of all levels, with judges, attorneys, law enforcement, and probation officers. We have used the results to apply for grant funding, with great success. The results guided our initial planning, and we organized a victim-offender mediation program that has since expanded to include family group and community conferencing, and peacemaking circles. We felt victim-offender dialogue honored community voices from the survey, by offering both victims and offenders opportunities to be heard, and to shape their futures in a manner that would repair harm and strengthen the community.

We have implemented other restorative practices unique to each town, too numerous to list here. Each practice has its roots in the results of the survey, and we continually make the connection back to the numerous stories and ideas that emerged from our time together.

For more information on the survey, contact Peg at (970) 247-0982, x117 or e-mail at peg.christian@judicial.state.co.us.

The Colorado Community Survey and results can be found on-line at www.voma.org.



Face to Face

continued from page 1

The global economy, environmental issues, and the growing recognition in biology that humans evolved through cooperation more than competition are all bringing into sharper focus our interdependence and, therefore, the urgency of paying attention to our impact on one another and our need for shared commitments concerning behavior.

Respectful, Reflective Atmosphere Critical for Good Community Dialog

Every single discussion about individual behavior, the impact of that behavior on others and the expectations those affected have for that individual can contribute to the process of stitching together a new set of community standards that will help us live productively with one another - if that dialog 1) allows everyone to speak and to be heard and 2) encourages reflection.

Both “spoken” and “heard” are critical elements of constructive dialog. The space for constructive dialog must first give opportunity for people to speak and second must create an atmosphere of respect for all parties in order for the spoken words to be heard. If people do not feel respected it is very difficult for them to hear clearly and meaningfully what is said to them. For communication to be effective, the space must be respectful for everyone.

Ours is a fast paced society. We have few quiet spaces in our lives. Those that we do have are usually personal. The creation of quiet spaces for reflection on public questions is not a part of our culture. Most public discussions are noisy, involve talking more than listening, discourage quiet people from contributing, allow a small number of people to dominate, and are uncomfortable with silence. Reflection entails listening deeply, hearing the

“We need community dialog about issues other than crime, but crime is a good place to start...”

perspective of another, thinking about what was heard, connecting things, opening the space for new thoughts and understandings. Reflection, like gazing in a mirror, requires looking inward. Outward distractions need to be kept to a minimum to allow the possibility of reflection. Without reflection the exchange of information or the commitments made may be shallow.

Characteristics of Restorative Dialog

Restorative face to face dialog processes are based on allowing each participant to speak, respect for all participants and consensus decision-making. These processes encourage people to think about how they feel, why they acted as they did and how other people are affected. In other words they encourage reflection by all participants. They allow time for all participants to reflect not only on what happened but also on the decisions now being made by the group and how everyone will be affected by those decisions. The pace of dialog in these processes is unhurried and silence is welcome. Space is allowed for participants to look inward as well as toward others in the group.

Restorative processes like conferencing, circles, mediation and neighborhood panels create spaces for people to explore behavioral expectations and why those expectations matter, and how others are affected when they are not met. All of these processes emphasize the importance of communicating to one another how we are affected by each other's actions and words. They require us to be explicit to ourselves and to others about our expectations and our needs, and to give clear reasons for those expectations.

Restorative dialog processes do more than address the offender's behavior. They establish expectations for all the other participants as well. When we articulate an expectation for others in a

public process, we are in effect also committing ourselves to that standard. Discussion of an offender's behavior in a circle sets the standard, not only for the offender, but also for everyone sitting in the circle.

Respectful dialog processes allow people to question expectations which are not grounded in concern for the well-being of others and to explore whether those expectations are appropriate. The standards desired by some community members may be harmful to other community members. The process of establishing community standards must involve all voices and be open to new information about negative impacts. The task is never complete. It is always temporary (the best we can do for the moment) because new information may alter the conclusion that a particular standard serves the well-being of all.

Because restorative processes initiate around the issue of crime, they often bring together very diverse perspectives. A restorative face to face process typically does not consist of a group of like-minded folks. The involvement of many perspectives enriches that search for meaningful standards of mutual responsibility.

We need community dialog about issues other than crime, but crime is a good place to start because it constitutes a clear challenge to community standards and because it can generate action more readily than most issues. Face to face restorative processes can transform the negative energy activated by a crime into positive energy for collective action toward the well-being of all.

The cumulative effect of the many, many conversations being held in mediations, conferences, circles and panels is a growing community conversation about our standards for behavior, our responsibilities to one another and our possibilities as citizens to shape the quality of our community life.

World Society of Victimology Requests Comments on Proposed Research Agenda

The World Society of Victimology (WSV) requests comments on its proposed research agenda. The proposal aims to provide members of WSV with an overview of key and emergent themes in victimological research. The WSV Research Committee has listed nine areas for research.

The proposed research agenda is being circulated for comment. The Research Committee is especially interested in the views of WSV members, however it also welcomes the views of all those interested in victimology research.

To view the proposed research agenda and learn how to send comments, link to the International Victimology website at: www.victimology.nl

It is through face to face reflective, respectful community dialog that we can touch one another's lives, feel one another's pain and find a path that serves both ourselves and others. In those spaces, informed by the wisdom of all present, we can, as Codrescu says, “see the soul,” and know from the soul the right thing to do.



VOMA Membership

- Agency membership is available to any organization that has an interest in the mediation and conferencing process, the philosophy of restorative justice, or the criminal justice system. Annual agency dues are \$150.00.
- Individual membership is available to those persons interested and/or involved in victim offender mediation and conferencing programs. Annual individual dues are \$40.00.
- Student membership is available to full-time students. Annual student dues are \$25.00.
- Library and educational institution membership are available, which consists of a subscription to the newsletter. Annual library and educational institution dues are \$30.00.

VOMA membership benefits include the VOMA Connections, the Annual Directory of Members, access to VOMA resources, and agency discounts on the Annual Conference.

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