

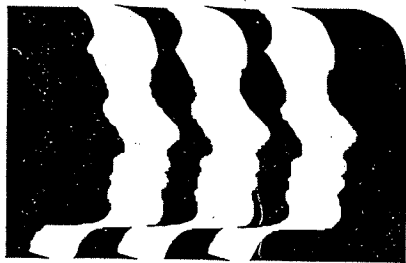


Spotlight on

For a look at the role of volunteers in restorative justice, *Kaleidoscope of Justice* talked with Kay Pranis, Restorative Justice Planner for the Minnesota Department of Corrections for the past 7 years. Her work includes teaching the principles of restorative justice and assisting those who want to establish restorative justice programs in the community. Much of her focus these days is on Circles, programs that bring community members together to be present with victims and offenders as they work through the issues that result from crime.

Passion and caring at core of volunteers' commitment to restorative justice

"The term 'volunteer' feels inadequate in the restorative justice paradigm. It brings to mind images of ancillary helpers." Kay Pranis is clear on the role of volunteers in restorative justice programs. "The direction I'd like to see is the community (volunteers) as the providers and the professionals as the supporters. The most important part of restorative justice is the work directed by community members who largely are unpaid." This meshes with her vision



of community: all individuals are connected and everyone is aware that their welfare is dependent on supporting the community as a whole.

There are a variety of roles for volunteers in restorative justice

work. Participating in the actual decision-making about a case, such as through a Circle, is perhaps the most visible role and is what most people think of first. However, volunteers are also needed in support roles such as being mentors to at-risk children and youth, or staffing hotlines for

crime victims. Policy-making also needs volunteers who will work with lawmakers and agency personnel in developing statutes that allow for restorative justice responses to crime.

Pranis finds that those who are drawn by passion and caring to volunteer in restorative justice are very effective in their roles. "They merge their positive vision of restorative justice with the energy to make a difference using skills they already possess. It is profoundly moving when volunteers make a commitment to a victim or offender and stay with that person even if they mess up, without being enabling." Pranis' experience shows that those for whom this is not a good fit do not stay long as volunteers.

Effective volunteers need training

Training is a must. We all have ingrained patterns of lecturing and advising, neither of which is helpful in restorative justice settings, according to Pranis. Good training teaches volunteers how to support and assist others, and includes the following aspects:

1) Everyone comes to the table with gifts, therefore no one is superior. Volunteers need to learn how to be present with one another and create a space to offer their gifts and not get in the way.

2) Stories are gentle ways of bringing in new ideas. Therefore, volunteers learn how to use their own stories to support others.

3) It is important to be present emotionally and spiritually with the person. Volunteers need to learn how to listen fully and then how to ask affective questions about the feelings expressed.

Training for the Circles model starts with a day and a half of values training. Pranis states, "Values are at the core of human inter-relatedness. The processes need to be constructed to make it safe for the values to come out. When this happens, people will move to-

As director of a runaway and homeless youth program (Project Youth) in Sheboygan County, Wisconsin for nine years, I really learned how important non-paid adult relationships are for youth.

The program has volunteer foster parents who are willing to give up to two weeks of foster care for a youth experiencing problems at home. The program works intensively with the family during the crisis.

A 14-year old girl, who was experiencing some abuse in her home with her parents, had run away and called our program. I picked her up from a friend's home and gave her a ride to the foster parents' home.

She was acting and talking like a typical teenager in crisis - somewhat critical - because of her fear. I talked with her about being respectful of the foster parents, "because they are volunteers and don't get paid. You need to treat their home with respect."

The car became quiet and I glanced over. Tears were streaming down her face. "I thought they were getting paid to take me in. Why would they want to help me - for nothing?"

This girl became good friends with the volunteer foster parents and later she stayed at their home - just for fun.

-Mary Klemme

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ward healing." She lists respect, honesty, sharing, inclusivity, love, and forgiveness among the values that are highlighted in the training.

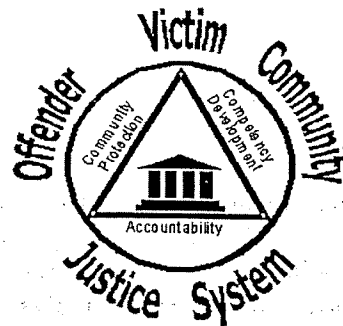
Using these values in Circles does not presume that caring between the victim and the offender will develop. It acknowledges, instead, that everyone is loved by someone in the Circle. Respect must be felt by everyone in the Circle. People are held accountable, but the core being of everyone involved is accepted.



Minnesota's restorative justice programs are heavily dependent on volunteers. Pranis points out that several Circle projects were started by volunteers from the local community, some of whom happened to be professionals. Resources to hire paid staff are necessary, however, to facilitate the use of volunteers as the projects develop and grow.

But volunteers remain essential to the programs. "It is critical for people needing support to know that people will be there for them without being paid." Pranis finds that those below the age of 28 have little sense of community caring and involvement. The only ones who have cared for them are family or paid professionals. Their world view of people acting only from self-interest gets shattered by the persistent caring of volunteers. "This is an opportunity to create a new pro-social world view," Pranis states. "It is important people not get paid; it is the nature of the gift that is part of the power of healing. Healing is greatly enhanced when people offer themselves with no obvious payback." Such is the nature of the role of the volunteer. ●

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The
Balanced and
Restorative
Justice Project
presents

Introduction to Restorative Justice

March 19-23, 2001

Radisson Atlanta Northlake, Tucker, GA

This is a comprehensive introduction to restorative justice. Costs include: registration: \$20; hotel \$75/night. Topics to be covered include:

- Principles and values
- Sample practices
- Involvement of victims and the community
- System readiness for change

The trainers will be Dee Bell, Restorative Justice Trainer, Decatur, Georgia; and Cassandra Washington Adams, Restorative Justice Trainer, Jacksonville, Florida.

This training is geared toward practitioners, volunteers and/or policy makers who work in or with the juvenile or criminal justice system. Appropriate candidates are those working in prevention, corrections, probation, law enforcement, courts, community organizations, and schools. This course will meet the "Introductory Training" prerequisite for the *Training for Restorative Justice Trainers Course* to be held May 11-20, 2001. For further information, contact the BARJ Project office at 954-762-5668.

An event of the Restorative Justice Academy at the Community Justice Institute, Florida Atlantic University. Made possible by a Juvenile Accountability Incentive Block Grant from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.



Further thoughts on training volunteers

Working with the Circles model has led Kay Pranis to think carefully about the importance of values training for those the volunteers. She finds that some training programs move towards this, but are not intentional about it. Pranis believes that there needs to be "more values training in the foundation of any training. Technique is never enough. Bad technique with a good values foundation is better than good technique without the values training."

This is not to say that basic skills training is not important. Working as an apprentice is a good way to obtain these skills. Pranis is opposed to a rigid certification process and doesn't believe that civil mediation training is essential to working as a facilitator in Victim Offender Mediation finding that there are many pathways to work within restorative justice model programs.

Pranis notes that the scripts used by some restorative justice programs are helpful in the beginning for new facilitators, but she hopes that they become able to move past the script. Scripts put the mediator in a controlling position because they predetermine the flow of the dialogue and do not allow the flow to emerge from the group. A good script, such as that used by Real Justice, captures some of the natural flow. As the skill level develops, Pranis hopes that the mediators will begin to be responsive to the needs of the group instead of sticking with the script. ●