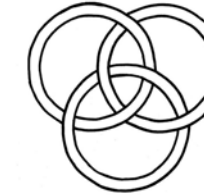


Center for Restorative Programs



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Spring 2008 Newsletter

The Center for Restorative Programs 1) brings young offenders, victims and the community together to search for reconciliation and solutions to “make things right.” 2) serves local schools & after-school sites with facilitation, training and intervention related to conflict resolution, peer mediation, restorative discipline, truancy mediation and bullying prevention; 3) provides Parent-Teen Mediation
 AND MORE!

Initiative Ends, But Work Continues

In April 2005, the Center became lead agency for a 3-year Bullying Prevention effort. This partnership with Tu Casa and Boys & Girls Clubs was part of a statewide Initiative of The Colorado Trust. These three years have provided important times of learning on several levels. First were steps to define the partnership, as well as educate our own staff regarding the best practices available to address bullying. This was followed by a series of trainings for staff at after-school sites, as well as area schools, to raise awareness about bullying and provide hands-on skills for prevention and intervention. Classroom activities, workshops and larger assemblies were also provided for youth of different ages - as well as parents - in a variety of settings throughout the Valley.

In Fall 2007, we and a number of co-sponsors hosted a community-wide keynote by Barbara Coloroso, a leading bullying prevention specialist. The following two days we provided an intensive symposium for area educators and community leaders covering a broad range of school climate concerns. The School Climate Symposium served as a cap-

stone to our earlier work, and also opened doors to new opportunities.

While the Colorado Trust Initiative ends this Spring, we remain committed to on-going work related to bullying awareness, prevention and intervention. We are currently training the Crestone Charter School staff in the Olweus program, an evidence-based bullying prevention model. A number of area schools and after-school sites are using our intervention services on a case-by-case basis to help address incidents of bullying, in addition to our work with the normal range of youth-to-youth conflict. We are also gearing up the Girls Circle program, to make it more available as a preventative approach to curb social aggression among girls. Read more about this inside the newsletter.

As the Bullying Prevention Initiative comes to a close, we would like to extend a special thanks to The Colorado Trust, especially Ed Lucero and Michelle LeBlanc, who believed in us at the outset and strengthened our capacity along the way.

☞ *“If crime is a wound, justice should be about healing.” - Dan Van Ness* ☞

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Take a look inside to learn
 more about:

- Center for Restorative Programs' new website!
- Girls Circle Training!



Girls Circle Model Comes to Valley

In response to a request from the Alamosa School District and a troubling trend in girl-to-girl conflict observed by our agency, we are taking steps to address girls' relational issues. In partnership with Tu Casa, Boys & Girls Clubs, SLV Mental Health, the Alamosa School District and the Senate Bill 94 Committee, we will host a Girls Circle Facilitators Training. This two-day event in early May will target 36 educators, youth service providers and community members, with the goal of creating a sustainable roster of facilitators available to run Circles throughout the Valley.

Girls Circle offers "a model of structured support groups for girls from 9-18 years. It is designed to foster self-esteem, help girls maintain authentic connection with peers and adult

women in their community, counter trends toward self-doubt, and allow for genuine self-expression through verbal sharing and creative activity." A small group of girls of similar age and development meet weekly with facilitators for ninety minutes to two hours. The girls take turns talking to one another about their concerns and interests, and further express themselves through creative activities such as role playing, journaling, poetry, and art.

This spring we are co-facilitating a pilot Girls Circle with Tu Casa for Alamosa High School students. Two additional circles for middle and high school girls will be offered during Alamosa's summer school. For more information about Girls Circle, call 719-589-5255.

Board Member Bios

Each newsletter we will be featuring a member of our Board of Directors. This issue features Pat Herrera, board treasurer. Pat was an early supporter of our agency and has been an active board member from the start. He works as the supervisor at Private Probation, a program of SLV Mental Health. A graduate of Alamosa High School and Adams State College, Pat has worked in the criminal justice arena for over 20 years. In 1995, Pat received the Outstanding Victim Advocate Award. He also serves on the Alamosa Community Review Board.

Pat has been married to Cindylee Herrera for sixteen years. Cindylee works for BOCES as a paraprofessional with special needs children, and is currently attending ASC to obtain her school counselor certification. They have two sons, Alonzo and Diego, ages seven and six. In his spare time, Pat enjoys playing golf. We are privileged to have Pat as a board member. He not only believes in our work, but also keeps us laughing.



Community Outreach



This winter and spring we have kept busy with various community and school trainings. In January, we provided an all-staff restorative discipline training for the Alamosa School District, followed by a Principals' Institute on the same subject. Similar training was provided to staff of the Boys & Girls Clubs as well. Mary Hennessey spoke on Children, Loss & Forgiveness at our annual meeting. We also presented at the Rotary Club about bullying. In February, we offered a community mediation training attended by 18 participants that included staff from mental health and Adams State College, as well as high school and college students. Jose Cholula (above with Renee Mackey) received our Volunteer of the Year award.

New Website Launched

We launched a new website at the end of February. Erin Kenzie, former School Programs Coordinator, designed the much-needed updates as part of our "name change" process. Check it out at www.restorativeprograms.org. Please report any bugs to info@restorativeprograms.org.

Parent-Teen Conflicts?

The Center for Restorative Programs offers free Parent-Teen Mediation to families experiencing the normal range of adolescent conflict. Referrals are accepted from youth-serving agencies, as well as families. Contact Parent-Teen Coordinator, Renée Mackey, at (719) 589-5255, for more information.

Tales from the Table

This spring we began working with the Alamosa School District to address truancy. To provide a restorative alternative to court, we designed a truancy mediation program. To address the problem early on, this pilot program is currently focusing on elementary students. Instead of simply asking, "How can we get the student to school every day?", mediation helps parents and administrators identify and overcome barriers to educational success. The following case study is typical of this new work. Involved in mediation were a parent and grandparent of an early elementary student, the principal, the classroom teacher, and the special education teacher.

The referral came from the early elementary school principal. She was concerned that a first-grader had missed a total of over 3 weeks of school. Compounding the situation was the school's recommendation that the child be tested for special education needs. The mother's recent absence from the required staffing, as well as the rising number of missed days, presented barriers to having the testing completed this school year. This left the school with the possible need to retain the child.

When visiting with the mother and grandmother, we learned that the child was often sick and at times was also emotionally upset about going to school. The mother felt it was her right to keep the child home, based on her best judgment, and that she being unfairly targeted. She and the grandmother did, however, express surprise at the total number of absences and recognized this as a potential problem for the child's success at school. While concerned about the child's academic lags,

the family remained hesitant to pursue screening by BOCES.

At the mediation, the principal explained why she was concerned about the number of absences, how her ideal situation would look, and why she thought special education might be a good option for this particular child.

The mother acknowledged that the student had missed too many days and promised to have him there every day, unless excused by the school nurse. When the conversation turned to academic concerns, the mother became emotional. She explained that she had been labeled "special ed" as a child and had suffered because of it. She did not want her child labeled the way she had been.

The special education teacher was able to explain that special education is different than it used to be, and that the child was already receiving supplemental services. However, without the BOCES screening, the child was in jeopardy of not moving on to second grade with his peers. The mother agreed to have her son screened, once he met the threshold of 30 days without an absence.

Basic trust and communication between the family and the school were restored and mutual expectations clarified. The ground was also laid for cooperation to address the child's needs through the balance of the school year and in the future. The meeting ended with all parties shaking hands. Everyone reported satisfaction with the process and relief that a mutual agreement focused on the child's best interests had been reached.