



ANNUAL REPORT

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FACEBOOK: VIRGINIA CENTER FOR
RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

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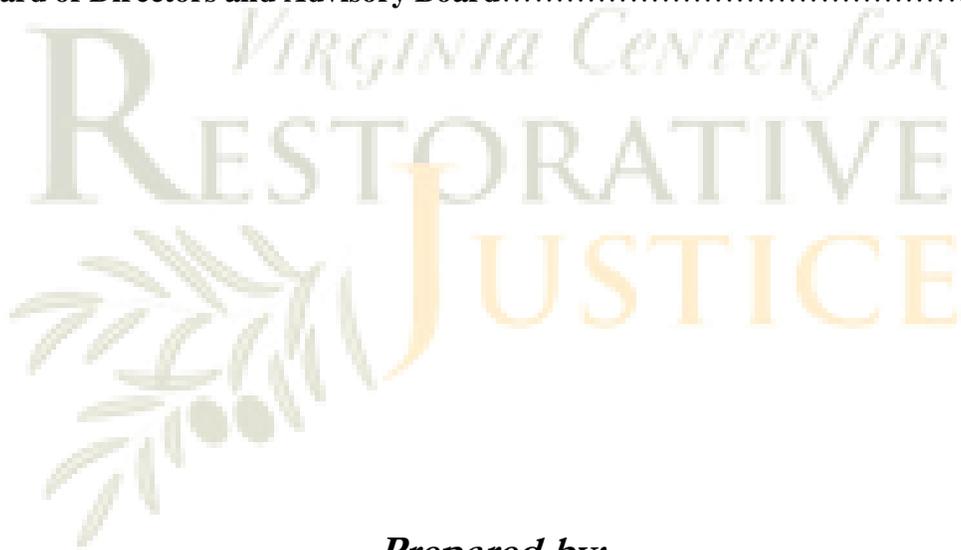
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From the Executive Director

Dear Friends,

Thank you for your support for VCRJ! This past year has been a time of many transitions and new beginnings for our organization, as we engage in our valuable mission of restorative justice. Our volunteer facilitators are continually reminded of how important these programs are to the people we serve, as we listen to their stories and witness growth and healing.

In June, Judy Clarke, MA, retired as executive director after serving in this position since she founded VCRJ in 2010. She has generously agreed to continue serving VCRJ as a volunteer and Board member, and is also working as a restorative justice consultant for the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP). We are deeply grateful for her years of dedicated leadership and service, and for the vision and inspiration that she brought to this organization.

After Judy's retirement, Daniel Foxvog became the new executive director of VCRJ. Daniel has an M.A. in Conflict Transformation from Eastern Mennonite University in Harrisonburg, VA. He has served as a conflict transformation practitioner in four states, providing training to teachers, police officers, students, pastors, and community volunteers. He has previously worked as a restorative justice case manager, mediator and church consultant, mental health case manager, and dialogue facilitator. He is passionate about building community partnerships, offering new learning opportunities for volunteers, and continuing to expand and adapt our existing programs, as we receive feedback from the groups we serve.

We have continued to proudly offer our evidence-based restorative justice programs to people in correctional centers, schools, and the juvenile justice system. In September 2018, we began a new partnership with the Henrico Police Athletic League, offering the "How to Handle Conflict" class to highly motivated youth (ages 12-18) in their Youth Leadership Council.

We are also excited to announce that we have a new address: **3601 Seminary Ave, Richmond, VA 23227**. In September, we moved operations out of the executive director's home, and began renting an office at Ginter Park Presbyterian Church. This allows us to have a more central office with public transportation access and permits us to store program supplies in one location. We are thankful to GPPC for this opportunity and their support.

Amid this change, we are deeply indebted to all of the community volunteers who make this work possible. Your faithful service and compassion embody the spirit of restorative justice, as you seek to make a difference in the community and transform people's lives.

Yours for the cause of justice and peace,

Daniel Foxvog

Daniel Foxvog, Executive Director
Virginia Center for Restorative Justice

Our Mission and Purpose

MISSION: The Virginia Center for Restorative Justice will encourage respect and mutual empowerment in the community and demonstrate effective, evidenced-based, restorative practices. Wherever people are in conflict with each other, VCRJ will help achieve peace by giving the victim a voice and helping to “make right” the harm. We turn harm into healing.

PURPOSE: Our purpose is to provide the community with innovative, cooperative, and restorative ways to resolve differences and transform relationships. The Center will:

- (a) provide restorative justice services to schools, juvenile courts, jails and prisons, and churches;
- (b) train facilitators to provide the services necessary;
- (c) educate the community about restorative justice, its uses and its benefits; and
- (d) foster policies that enhance opportunities for restorative justice to be implemented.

Services

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE SCHOOL PROGRAM:

This was the third year of our successful “Game Changers” program with 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade students at Glen Lea Elementary School in the Henrico County Community Learning Center Extended Day Program. In 2018, we served about 130 students. The weekly topics encouraged students to learn, think about and practice: trust, honesty, respect, empathy, forgiveness, integrity, accountability, determination, humility and service. We use a variety of creative learning tools with the children, including videos, teambuilding activities, stories, and group discussions. This program helps students develop these valuable social skills and apply them in daily life, so they can become “game changers” in their own community.

Stories and Testimonials



Shauna Ely (*VCRJ Board of Directors*) - Every day we see the children at Glen Lea Elementary, I always wonder how much they are taking away from our lessons. We tell them that we are here to be "game changers", but how much of that do they actually understand? During one of our meetings, my worries were put to rest. During our ‘Determination’ week, we started off with the question “How have you shown determination?” One child raised his hand and told a story of how he played a game with his sister and she kept winning game after game. Instead of giving up, he decided to watch how she played and tried to use that to his advantage. Afterward, he stated that he was able to win against his sister. So not only did give a great example of determination, but he also, literally, “changed the game.”



Jean Oswald (*VCRJ volunteer*) - She sat in the circle with her head down, body racked with sobs while her classmate plied her with questions: "What's the matter, what happened?" "My Mom will punish me," she stammered, "I broke my new shoes on the playground and she'll be mad." Quickly the children admonished her to be honest and tell her Mom what really happened, "Then she won't be mad." At this moment the children demonstrated empathy, and throughout the remainder of the Restorative Session at Glen Lea Elementary school, the third graders exhibited skills learned in the 10-week program as they wrote notes and drew pictures to make her feel better. The child left the session, with a plan for sharing her story with her mother, having rehearsed the story with the group. The following session, she reported that all had gone well thus being accountable to the group who had helped her understand and deal with the problem. Her classmates helped her become a "game changer" in her home.

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE CORRECTIONAL CENTER PROGRAM:

VCRJ has offered the "How to Handle Conflict" program in correctional Facilities since 2010, using the circle process to help incarcerated adults learn about restorative justice principles and explore how they can apply to their own lives. Our volunteers meet weekly with residents in four facilities: Deep Meadow Correctional Center, Virginia Correctional Center for Women, Fluvanna Correctional Center, and Chesterfield Detention and Diversion. In 2018, we served an estimated 700 women and men. We provide curriculum for the residents, but also the valuable opportunity for them to reflect on their lives and choices with peers in a safe environment, where they are listened to and treated with dignity. Our facilitators often observe significant growth and changes in attitude among the participants over the course of the 5-week or 10-week programs, as they come to trust and learn from each other.

Stories and Testimonials



Glenn Chewing (*Chair of the Board of Directors*) - I have been a volunteer facilitator with the Virginia Center for Restorative Justice for 5 years. Frequently over those years, an inmate has said that *How to Handle Conflict* is "so important because I have a chance to tell my story and it brings healing. No other program enables me to do this." VCRJ provides a safe and confidential atmosphere in which inmates can tell their story. It is an amazing blessing to be a part of this experience.



Nathan Beyah (*VCRJ volunteer*) - My experience at Deep Meadow Correctional Center has been so rewarding, insightful, helpful, and fulfilling. I pray that I contribute to the inmates a fraction of what I receive from them. The womb that they have been physically put into can produce a hard calloused individual, but in most cases, I have observed just the opposite. I realize that education, in the true sense of being educated, can rehabilitate a person. These men, in many cases, have been rehabilitated. Unfortunately, society has to go to rehab spiritually, and become a forgiving place for their return. However, there are some also people that should not return, because they cannot or refuse to be changed.

I have been changed in how I view a person, now understanding how fortunate I am. I realize how easily, but for the grace of God, I could be the one returning to a pod [housing unit] after the “How to Handle Conflict” class is over, instead of returning home. It's so fulfilling when I ride home, and think what it would be like to spend 10, 20, or 30 years of my life without a true mate, family, or productive life. I realize that I am TRULY blessed. I love the work I do for VCRJ.



Carrington Brown (*VCRJ volunteer*) - Every time I leave a correctional institute after facilitating one of our classes, I am grateful and at the same time humbled. I am grateful that I can walk out freely into open spaces, but humbled by the stories the women in the institutions tell me. Most are incarcerated because of crimes related to drug or alcohol abuse, and the resulting life that follows. Whether at Goochland, Chesterfield Detention Center or Fluvanna, the woman’s stories are similar. By being given an opportunity to tell their stories (often never heard before) and by being listened to, the women are given a chance to heal.

When first working with restorative justice, I was told that “storytelling heals.” I didn’t realize how true that statement is! By being present, by listening and making the incarcerated women feel they are worthy of being heard, we (as Restorative Justice facilitators) give incarcerated people a chance to feel empathy for their victims and peel back the layers of self-awareness, discovering their habitual reactions and finding their “pause” button. While prison is often a place the “offender” learns to be self-centered, they can discover that finding empathy for the victim and awareness of the harm they did has the ability to heal them. They learn to look outward and hopefully find their place in the community.

I often ask myself if I learn more from the women then they learn from me. The biggest lesson I have taken with me from my restorative justice work is that we are all alike – whether we are incarcerated or free. We all want community, acceptance, and love. I know the work we do is valuable.



Carrie Emery (*VCRJ volunteer, previously served on the Board of Directors*) - Years ago, in my first “How to Handle Conflict” class at VCCW, one of the participants thanked me at our last session for calling her by her first name. She was surprised that with a group of 18 or 20 women, I could remember her name. The message of her words said that she didn’t feel worthy and didn’t expect anyone to bother to learn her name. I have never forgotten her words or her message, and I have made it my goal to learn every participant’s name in each of my classes. Last month, as I handed out certificates of completion, I was again met with a surprised face from one woman who said, “I can’t believe you remember each of our names.”

Just last week, as I was going through security at one of the facilities, several women who had been in the previous month’s class came into the building after completing a work detail in the yard. As they passed by, I caught the eye of one woman and said, “Good morning, Mary. How are things going for you?” She smiled and said, “fine” and then added, “I can’t believe you still remember my name.”

It’s such a simple thing that means so much to these women. Calling them by their first names instead of a number or their last name reminds them they are more than an offender. They are human beings on the road to a better future.

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE JUVENILE DETENTION CENTER:

In 2017, we began to offer our evidence-based, Circle Process - “How to Handle Conflict” program at the Bon Air Juvenile Correctional Facility, using an age-adapted version of the curriculum, based on restorative justice values. This provides a critical opportunity for moral and social development to young people who are headed on the wrong path, helping them to develop skills that will allow them to succeed. This past year, about 30 youth participated in the program from two different housing units. We are pleased with the initial reception by both staff and residents, and we hope to continue offering this program to youth at Bon Air in 2019.

Stories and Testimonials



Robert Thornhill (*VCRJ volunteer, previously served on the Board of Directors*) - The first thing I noticed when I got out of my car was the barbed wire fence. You were frisked for contraband. The doors were heavy and locked. Bon Air Juvenile Correctional Center is a 284-capacity facility serving a coed population of males (age 14-18) and females (age 11-20) who have been committed by the juvenile court. Residents placed at the facility have been adjudicated of crimes ranging from misdemeanors to felonies. Residents receive mental health and rehabilitative counseling services, along with specialized treatment programs, academic programs,

and volunteer programming.

The work of serving with those deemed less deserving has its own set of challenges. I remember when I first decided to volunteer at the facility. I wondered if I could communicate to these young men effectively. Would my own implicit biases impact how I would view them? I knew that I didn't just look at them as only criminals or throwaways. I believed they were all redeemable. I prayed that I could make a difference. You see, my faith dictates that I extend compassion to those less fortunate. My belief holds on to the principle that all of us are God's creatures and all should be given an opportunity to correct mistakes and to live with dignity and love.

While serving at Bon-Air, I tried to use the principles of restorative practice, especially with respectful talking and listening skills. I felt their joy and pain, their disappointments and success, most of them scarred and traumatized by life. I have an abundance of hope for these young people. Serving these youth has been and continues to be one of my greatest joys.

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE JUVENILE COURT SERVICE UNIT:

The Family Group Conference is a process that allows victims, offenders, and community members to meet each other and address the crime in a safe environment, facilitated by trained volunteers. This cooperative process allows the group to recognize the harm and hold the offender personally accountable, identify the resulting needs of the victim and the community, and create a plan for the offender to “make things right” as much as possible.

In the past year, the Virginia Center for Restorative Justice received about ten case referrals from the Henrico County and Richmond City Juvenile Court Service Units for our Family Group Conference, with nine cases successfully completed. The program has been well received, providing a unique opportunity for victims to have their questions answered and individual needs addressed, for offenders to learn empathy and accountability, and for community members to have a voice in addressing the aftermath of crime. We plan to continue building this partnership with the Court Service Units, and providing education to their staff about restorative justice, so this program can continue to grow.

Stories and Testimonials



Daniel Foxvog (*Executive Director*) – This summer, we worked with a ten-year-old boy who had been arrested because he and some friends had shot out a window at their school with a BB gun. As part of the process, he completed our “How to Handle Conflict” workbook, and was able to answer our questions about empathy, respect, and other values with impressive maturity for his age.

When he and his mother met with the principal, he carefully listened to her explain how this act had endangered his fellow students, wasted school employees' limited time, and had contributed to negative stereotypes about the school and neighborhood. He apologized and asked the principal and his mother for forgiveness, while crying. At the principal's request, he agreed to help clean up and maintain flower beds at the school for several months. He showed genuine regret for his behavior and owned up to how he had hurt his mother and the school community. This experience appeared to be a wake-up call for him, which will hopefully motivate him to be more careful about peer pressure and make better choices in the future, so he can achieve his life goals.

History

The Virginia Center for Restorative Justice (VCRJ) was formed in August 2010 as a faith-based 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. We began to recruit and train volunteers right away. They were asked to facilitate dialog circles, based on restorative justice principles (trust, honesty, respect, empathy, forgiveness, integrity, accountability, determination, humility and service to community), with residents in Virginia Correctional Centers located throughout the Commonwealth. We offer this popular dialog circle program in prisons as a five-week or ten-week class, called "How to Handle Conflict." We meet weekly in four different correctional facilities and are seeking to recruit additional volunteers so we can expand this program to other jails and prisons.

We began offering the Family Group Conference as a diversion program in Henrico and Richmond City Juvenile Court Service Units in 2015. Being able to offer young people a second chance to make right the harm they created was exhilarating. We offered the Family Group Conference to approximately 50 different case referrals with an 87% success rate. (87% of the young people who completed our restorative justice program did not re-offend.) This evidence supports our belief that when people are held accountable for their offenses and are given the opportunity to face their victims and "make right" the harm they created, they are less likely to repeat that harm.

Starting in 2016, Henrico County Public Schools offered us the opportunity to facilitate dialog circles in their Extended Day Program for students at Glen Lea Elementary School. In spring 2017, the 48 third grade extended day students received a total of seven behavioral referrals, compared to 84 referrals from the 22 students not enrolled in the program (a rate of .07 for extended day students, versus 3.81 per non-extended day student). We continued this successful program in 2018, working with students in 3rd, 4th, and 5th grades.

Condensed Financial Information

At VCRJ, we strive to keep our expenses low, while making a deep impact. From September 2017 to August 2018, we spent \$32,311.73 to run this program. During the same fiscal year, we had a total income of \$24,787.64.

Since VCRJ's income and expenses vary from year to year, we maintain a financial reserve to allow for flexibility. This past year, we had to dip into this reserve, since there were several revenue sources that concluded, including a contract with Big Brothers Big Sisters.

About 50% of VCRJ's income came from service fees or contracts for our restorative justice programs in the juvenile justice system and schools. Another 44% of the income came from generous contributions from individual donors, churches, and other organizations. About 6% of the income came from other sources.

We recently entered into two new service agreements that enable VCRJ to receive additional funding. In the spring of 2018, AMikids made a contract with VCRJ for providing Family Group Conferences. In the fall of 2018, VCRJ entered into an annual contract with the Virginia Department of Corrections for providing the "How to Handle Conflict" program at correctional facilities. These partners recognized the value of the services that VCRJ already provided, and offered these contracts because they wanted us to continue providing and strengthening these programs in collaboration with them.

If you have any questions, please email danielfoxvog@vcrj.org. Your financial support is deeply appreciated in order to help us continue our ministry.

Special Acknowledgements

Special thanks to our volunteers, the VCRJ Board of Directors, and our funders. Our volunteers are the heart and soul of VCRJ: we count on volunteers to facilitate circles and conferences, to teach our values, and to live a restorative lifestyle each and every day. Thank you for your hard work and dedication! Further, we would like to recognize the contribution of support and encouragement from the following:

- Ann Tolleson Beane
- Anonymous Donors
- Dover Baptist Association, Ashland, VA
- Ginter Park Presbyterian Church, Richmond, VA
- Henrico Education Foundation
- Mount Vernon Baptist Church, Glen Allen, VA
- St. Paul's Baptist Church, Richmond, VA



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