



ANNUAL REPORT

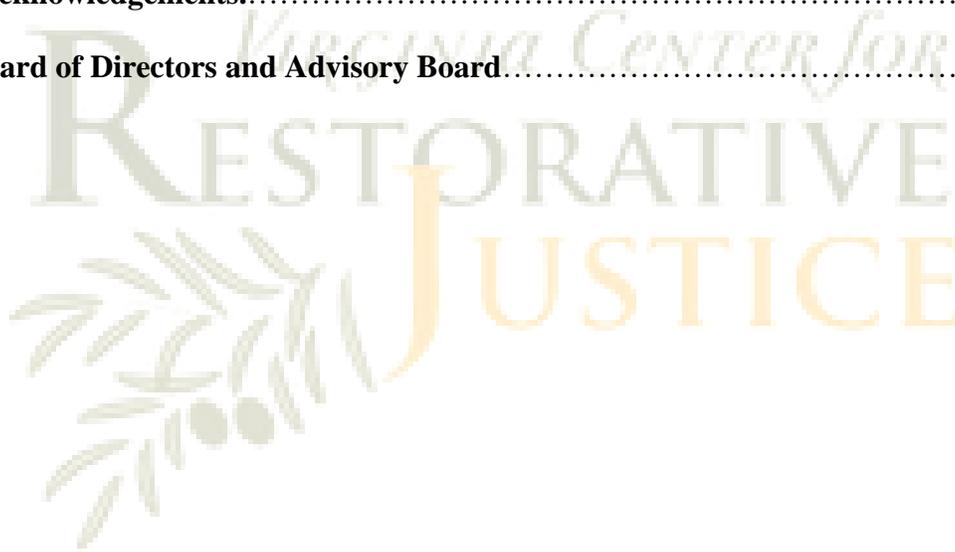
DECEMBER 2020

WWW.VCRJ.ORG/

FACEBOOK: VIRGINIA CENTER FOR
RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

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From the Executive Director

Dear Friends,

Thank you for supporting VCRJ through your volunteer work, prayer, donations, partnerships, and outreach on our behalf. We are grateful for everything that you do to make this work of healing and restoration possible.

Despite all of the challenges this year, we still managed to accomplish some great things. VCRJ received twelve new referrals for family group conferences this year, similar to the last few years. Between January and March, about ninety incarcerated people participated in our *How to Handle Conflict* classes, before the pandemic forced us to temporarily suspend the program. In the fall, we held several online workshops on restorative justice for staff members from the Department of Criminal Justice Services. In addition, volunteers and I have worked to create new workshops, update our curriculum, expand restorative justice services to another county, and begin developing several projects for the future.

Earlier this year, Bradford Howard retired from our Board of Directors after many years as a Board member and a volunteer with the *How to Handle Conflict* program. We are grateful for his contributions and his passion for serving and mentoring incarcerated people.

Unfortunately, several contracts and grant-funded projects had to be suspended or postponed due to COVID-19 restrictions, resulting in a major loss of funding. It has become clear that VCRJ will not have enough funds to continue paying a full-time employee through this pandemic. At my recommendation, the Board of Directors has decided that VCRJ will temporarily transition to a volunteer-run model, and I will leave at the end of December. VCRJ's work will continue, being carried on by Board members and other volunteers until more funding is available.

It has been a privilege to serve with many of you the past two and half years, and I am grateful for the opportunity I have had to lead VCRJ's mission in the community. I am proud of the work VCRJ has done to expand our training programs with schools and other organizations, to update and develop new curriculum, and to build new partnerships.

This emphasis on partnerships and equipping community organizations reflects our mission to “encourage respect and mutual empowerment in the community and demonstrate effective, evidenced-based, restorative practices.” In the midst of these changes, VCRJ remains deeply committed to its mission and the people we serve.

Respectfully yours,

Daniel Foxvog

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 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 five facilities: State Farm Correctional Center (formerly Deep Meadow), Virginia Correctional Center for Women, Fluvanna Correctional Center for Women, State Farm Enterprise Unit (formerly Powhatan), and Chesterfield Detention and Diversion. The participants learn and discuss themes of trust, honesty, respect, empathy, forgiveness, integrity, accountability, determination, humility, and service. This program provides a valuable opportunity for inmates to reflect on their lives and discuss issues with peers in a safe environment where their voices are valued and they are treated with dignity. Due to COVID-19, the Department of Corrections suspended all volunteer programs, but we were still able to serve about ninety people from January and March, and we look forward to resuming the program in 2021.

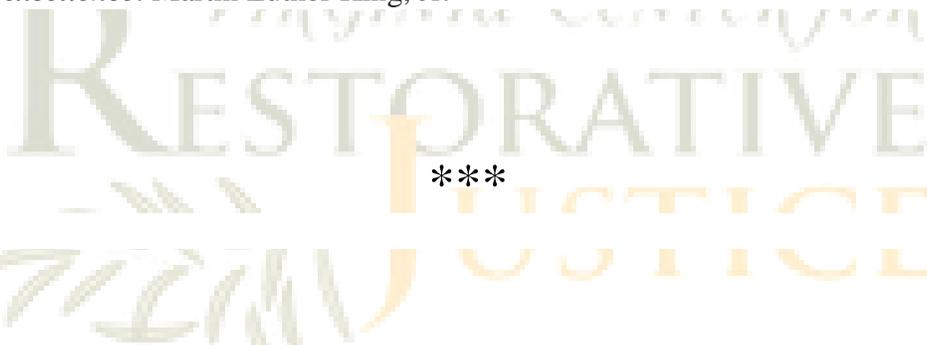
Stories and Testimonials



Tawn Denise Walker (*VCRJ volunteer*) - As I reflect on my experience with VCRJ I feel grateful that one day I followed through with something that was in my heart to do. After having worked in education in various capacities for over 35 years, I had witnessed the reality of the school to prison pipeline and wanted to be part of the answer. The training I received as a VCRJ volunteer has been invaluable in helping me become an agent of change.

As a volunteer, I have continued to learn and grow in my humanity and as a professional. One of the key skills needed in this process is active listening. Enough cannot be said about developing the ability to hear what people are saying and to listen for what they do not say verbally. Hearing the stories of those incarcerated has only strengthened my commitment to the men, women, youth, and families who find themselves in need of a potentially transformative alternative to the “corrective” actions of the justice system. It is not an easy work, but most certainly a necessary one.

All labor that uplifts humanity has dignity and importance and should be undertaken with painstaking excellence. Martin Luther King, Jr.





Sally Molenkamp (*VCRJ volunteer*) - For many reasons, 2020 has been a very hard year. Life as we knew it has been put on hold. While there are many things I miss, very near the top is my weekly trip out to the Virginia Correctional Center for Women. There, a partner and I would hold a “How to Handle Conflict” class. For two hours every week we would sit in a circle with a group of women, hear their stories, cry with them, laugh with them, and try to impart some thoughts on ways to turn their lives around and move forward in new and meaningful ways.

These are women who are strong and thoughtful and caring. Yes, they have made mistakes and poor choices and, in many cases, have been given hard life situations to bear. As the women become more trusting of us and of each other, they are more able to open up, to share their inner stories and to begin a healing process. I am always touched by how much the women begin to care for each other, even, in some cases, women who were antagonistic to each other in the beginning. We are really more facilitators and askers of questions than answer givers. I often leave class feeling like perhaps I’ve gotten more out of the session than I have given. I most certainly look forward to when we can start up the program again.

AN INVITATION TO BRAVE SPACE

~ Micky ScottBey Jones (www.thepeoplesupper.org)

*Together we will create brave space
Because there is no such thing as a “safe space” —
We exist in the real world
We all carry scars and we have all caused wounds.
In this space
We seek to turn down the volume of the outside world,
We amplify voices that fight to be heard elsewhere,
We call each other to more truth and love
We have the right to start somewhere and continue to grow.
We have the responsibility to examine what we think we know.
We will not be perfect.
This space will not be perfect.
It will not always be what we wish it to be
But
It will be our brave space together,
and
We will work on it side by side.*

At Sally’s suggestion, volunteers have used this invitation as an opening reflection for Circles.

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE SERVICE



Lou Freyer (VCRJ Board Secretary) - In September, Daniel and I presented a web-based training for juvenile justice staff from the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services. The topic was an introduction to basic Restorative Practices, and use of RJ in both as prevention in schools and other facilities serving youth, and as a response to wrong-doing. The training consisted of four hours of instruction, including a circle role-play. There were 45 - 48 attendees each day, and the response was positive. There may be opportunities to conduct more trainings for DCJS in the future, and we will continue to develop our skills at delivering trainings remotely.

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.

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. In the past year, VCRJ received twelve case referrals from the Henrico and Richmond Court Service Units, and we also completed three additional cases that began in December 2019. Due to the pandemic, we have been holding most of these meetings by video.

Stories and Testimonials

Taffy Lowery (*VCRJ Board of Directors*) I have had the opportunity to co-facilitate several juvenile victim-offender conferences this year. As I look back on the experience, I want to identify four points that support the basic tenants of restorative justice in use in the conferences. First, in the initial stage of the conference process, I sat down with both the victim and the offender and listen to their stories; this allows both to have a voice. So often in the current system, neither has a voice of their own. Second, the process of telling their story. Through the telling, each revisits their own thoughts and feelings about the event. This puts the event into perspective and allows each to reflect on that moment in time. Third, the group conference event. This allows each participant to hear the other's thoughts and feelings about the event. Each person recounts what they thought at the moment the harm occurred; this allows each a window into the other's world -- Empathy. Fourth, the resolution and the contract as the outcome of the family group conference. A harm has occurred through the actions of the offender, the offender has a opportunity to be accountable for the harm, and to repair the harm . Through the contract the offender takes responsibility for the harm and actively seeks to repair the harm. The victim is directly part of agreeing to the contract and personally seeing that the harm is repaired.

I have observed tremendous learning on the parts of both victim and offender. By actively examining their thoughts and feelings, growth occurs and an event that started as very negative is transformative for both.

It has been a great blessing to be involved in the juvenile case mediations. It is a second chance for young persons who have made bad choices, but are good young people. I will add that the added benefit for each family is that the parents are affected and learn as well. In a recent case, the challenges of the "2020 virtual school system" came into lengthy discussion because of the challenges for working parents and children that have too much time on their hands. Many school sports, clubs, and youth groups have stopped meeting or are only virtual and this does not meet young people's needs. I would encourage any and all reading this to get involved. This is and can be a life changing experience for everyone involved.

Our church had our first interaction with Restorative Justice this year. We were very pleased with the entire process and outcome of our situation. Daniel was thoughtful and thorough during the process. We're grateful that this option for first-time offenders exists in our county. We would not hesitate to work with them again in the future. - *Ann Long & Kristin Tetterton*
Administrative Directors, West End Presbyterian Church

From the Board of Directors



Glenn Chewing (*Chairman of the Board*) It is impossible to predict 2021, with so many unknowns. We don't have any idea when Virginia prisons will open, allowing volunteers to provide restorative justice programs to inmates. However, I do believe when that time comes, our trained volunteers will respond. In the meantime, Board members have volunteered to take on specific tasks and to coordinate the Family Group Conferences and other projects.

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. One of our first programs were dialog circles, based on restorative justice and the principles of trust, honesty, respect, empathy, forgiveness, integrity, accountability, determination, humility and service to community. We offer this popular dialog circle program in prisons as a five-week or ten-week class, called "How to Handle Conflict."

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 take responsibility and make things right to the people they harmed was exhilarating. Over the first few years, we received 50 case referrals for Family Group Conferences, and had an 87% success rate. (87% of the young people who completed our restorative justice program did not re-offend within a year.) 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.

Since 2017, VCRJ has also provided an after-school program that introduced children to restorative justice values, dialog circles for high school youth, restorative justice training for hundreds of teachers and school administrators, and workshops on restorative justice for state employees and members of the public.

Condensed Financial Information

At VCRJ, we strive to keep our expenses low, while making a deep impact. From September 2019 to August 2020, we spent \$43,523.43 to run this program – these expenses include equipment and supplies, office rent, workbooks, staff salary, travel, insurance and fees, and volunteer training. During the same fiscal year, VCRJ had a total income of \$35,997.33.

About 73% of VCRJ's revenue came from service fees or contracts for our restorative justice programs in the juvenile justice system, Department of Corrections, and schools. Another 25% of the income came from generous contributions from individual donors, churches, and other organizations.

If you have any questions, please contact us. 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 the principles of restorative justice, and to promote restorative justice in their communities. Thank you for your hard work and dedication! Further, we would like to recognize the financial support from the following individuals and groups:

- Addison Jones
- Ann Tolleson Beane
- Daniel Bagby
- Dover Baptist Association
- Elizabeth Long
- First Mennonite Church, Richmond, VA
- Ginter Park Presbyterian Church, Richmond, VA
- Judy Clarke
- Ron Broocks
- Sally Molenkamp
- Sandy Elliott
- Susan Clarke
- Stacey Fevinger
- Trish Bowes

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