



ANNUAL REPORT

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FACEBOOK: VIRGINIA CENTER FOR
RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

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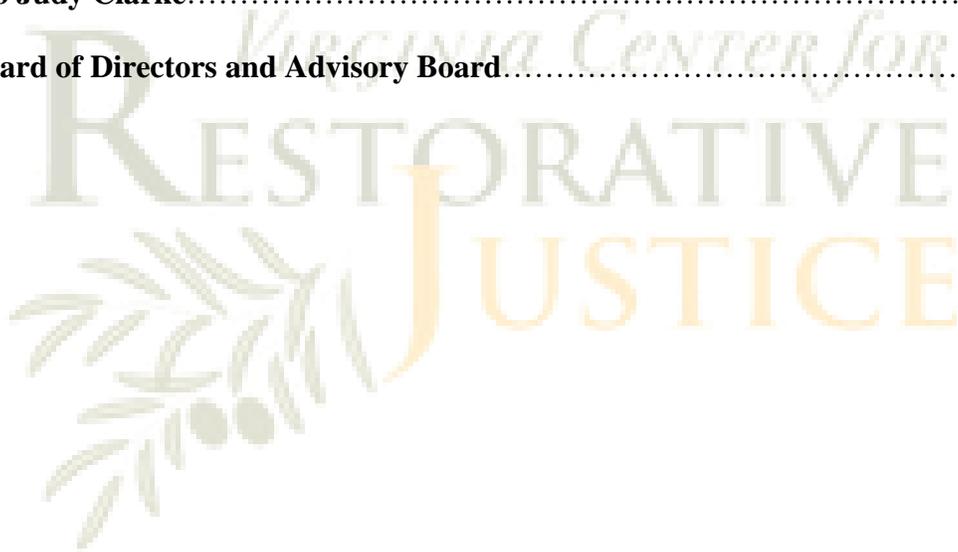
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From the Executive Director

Dear Friends,

Thank you for supporting VCRJ in so many ways - volunteer work, prayer, donations, community outreach, and collaborating with us on projects. You are the lifeblood of VCRJ, and we are grateful for everything that you do to make this mission possible.

This past March, we began offering our “How to Handle Conflict” program at a fifth correctional facility, the State Farm Enterprise Unit (formerly known as Powhatan). The new class has gone extremely well, as the men have participated faithfully and shown insightful self-reflection in every discussion. In the spring of 2019, we concluded our 10-week “How to Handle Conflict” program with youth in the Youth Leadership Council of the Henrico Police Athletic League. During the summer and fall, VCRJ collaborated with Cristo Rey Richmond High School and Pulaski County Public Schools to train teachers and administrators on how to use restorative justice practices in schools. We also continue to provide the Family Group Conference process for youth offenders and victims of crime.

In 2019, VCRJ welcomed Shirley Gibbs, Lashawnda Singleton, and Lou Freyer to the Board of Directors. Lashawnda is a social worker and works as a Reentry Outreach Coordinator for the Department of Corrections working to assist returning citizens with successful transitions into society. Lou is a retired school counselor and licensed psychologist who has taught restorative justice practices and facilitated family group conferences in schools since the 1990s. Shirley is a retired teacher who volunteers at Fluvanna Correctional Center for Women with the chaplaincy program and the “How to Handle Conflict” class.

Over the past year, Will McClean, Shauna Ely, and Judy Clarke left the Board to focus on other projects and obligations. We are very grateful for their service to VCRJ and efforts to promote restorative justice in Virginia, and we wish them success in their future endeavors.

I am excited to see new opportunities emerging for community partnerships, in order to promote restorative justice in schools, neighborhoods, prisons, and court systems. This work is needed, since our communities face so many challenges, including poverty, underperforming schools, racial discrimination, neighborhood crime, gun violence, and intergenerational trauma. Restorative justice is not a panacea for these ills – but it is part of the solution. Our communities are thirsting for peace, healing, justice, and transformation, and restorative justice offers hope and a path toward these goals.

Yours for the cause of justice,

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. During the summer, we began an exciting process of reviewing and updating our curriculum, in order to reflect the feedback of volunteers and participants. Here are some reflections from inmates who participated in this program.

Stories and Testimonials



Paula Johns - *How to Handle Conflict* is a wonderful class - it has taught me how to be humble in negative situations. I have changed the way I think. I have learned to be accountable for my actions. I have learned what the word integrity means and I'm proud to say that's what I practice now!



Andrea Gehring - Each week I look forward to attending this group with my peers and facilitators to share my experiences, thoughts, and feelings in a candid unbiased environment. I've learned new and different ways to express myself and explain my feelings and experiences. This group has brought a calm and relaxing environment for me to look forward to each week. I've been able to share with my peers openly with confidence. I've been able to release my anxieties, insecurities, and emotions. The facilitators have been kind, warm, supportive, and helpful with what is often difficult for me to talk about and deal with. I wish the group was

longer.



Anthony Maurice Jordan - I am appreciative of the volunteers who give up their time to come into a hostile environment to help me understand some basic concepts, like integrity, honesty, respect, and humility. Through their efforts, I have gained access to the keys of success. The article on "Empathy and Conscience" was extremely insightful. I learned that when I lost my natural sense of conscience, I lost my ability to experience my own pain; thereby, losing compassion and empathy for others. I find all of the questions and activities meaningful because if participants are sincere about rehabilitation, the questions and activities

will stimulate the natural sense of conscience.



Daisy Moorefield - This program has helped me with myself and to also be more accountable, and to deal with certain things and people. It has changed how I deal with negativity by others, and most importantly, how to respect myself and how to forgive myself and others. It is bringing out a new me, and I have enjoyed this program.



Shaqueena Chambers - *How to Handle Conflict* has helped me in so many ways. I see a change in myself: I've learned to be honest, but not brutally honest; I've learned to respect people more, even if they choose to be mean; I'm a lot more forgiving with people, and I use empathy a lot more now. Trust is still hard... you can't trust everyone, but you can give everyone a chance and go from there. Thanks, guys - you are awesome and I believe you all helped me with my anger issues, attitude, and outlook on different people's way of thinking.



John Yeoman - What I have gained from this class is a deeper look within myself. I've learned how to be more open about things that I probably would have not shared in the past... The thing I appreciate from this class is the way that everybody has a chance to speak and go into depth about a particular topic. I remember how the class was going over the word "integrity" and what it meant to everyone. What I appreciated so much was how everyone gave a different definition of what the word meant to them, but I was able to see how it was able to fit into everybody's equation. It was a way of finding better solutions to problems that most of the class had not thought of at one

time or another. Now, with the different points of view and the many different definitions, there were answers to questions that we had.

What I would like volunteers to know when they come to volunteer in prison is that we are people just like them. A lot of times, prisoners are stereotyped [in society]. So, I would like people to know that we are all individuals and a lot of what they may hear about prison isn't necessarily the truth. Most of us just want to be treated as humans. Sometimes we can be overloaded, mistreated, and disrespected without any cause. Most of the prisoners are also looking for assistance with programs like restorative justice to help us with some of the ways to rehabilitate ourselves. As prisoners, sometimes we don't know how to ask for help... So volunteers, just be patient with us. Treat us as individual human beings and then we might open up to the point where we will not only learn how to ask for help but we will feel more comfortable about doing so.



Kamaal Thompson – I appreciated the positive feedback from the other inmates and learning from the older inmates... The word empathy is very similar to sympathy. I would hear the word sympathy a lot, especially when someone passed away. The word empathy is new to me, but now I have a full understanding of that word.



Carol Newman - *How to Handle Conflict* has helped me understand myself and others. It also has helped me to think more about things that affect me with others in all kinds of situations. I think more about my days now and try to see if any of the situations we have talked about in class have come up, and if so, have I handled them better, now that we have discussed them in class.

I'm so glad I took this class I hope that others will get a chance to do so. I feel it is a big help for now and later in life. It will be a big help for my travels in life now that I know that they are what you need. I liked the way we used a feather and "Hope" stone to keep the group organized during discussions. Thank you so much for your guidance



Lisa Blair - This class has given me great pleasure of learning new things. At this point in my life, I'm like a child learning for the first time the true definition of these words... I'm very thankful for this class, it really helped me through a rough time. So keep this program going – it will save lives.

HENRICO POLICE ATHLETIC LEAGUE

From September 2018 to April 2019, VCRJ provided the “How to Handle Conflict” program to participants in the Youth Leadership Council of the Henrico Court Service Unit. About 25 middle school and high school youth participated in this program, which was offered once or twice per month. Each session focused on a different value, such as integrity or empathy.



Stories and Testimonials



Shauna Ely (*Former VCRJ Board of Directors*) - Working with the middle and high schoolers at the Henrico Police Athletic League was a wonderful experience. Listening to the stories and the way they connected to the tenets of Restorative Justice was eye-opening in addition to teaching me some different perspectives when it comes to Restorative Justice.

CRISTO REY RICHMOND HIGH SCHOOL



Lou Freyer (*VCRJ Board of Directors*) - In August, VCRJ provided a day and a half of training in using Restorative Practices in a school setting at Cristo Rey Richmond High School. Cristo Rey is a new high school, which opened in September 2019 with their first freshman class. Their mission is to provide a “learning community that educates young people of limited economic means to become men and women of faith, purpose and service. Through a rigorous college preparatory curriculum, integrated with a relevant work study experience, students graduate ready

to succeed in college and in life.”

The administrators and staff are committed to use restorative principles and practices as the basis of their school community, and discipline structure, and invited VCRJ to train all of their teachers and other staff members. Daniel and Lou enjoyed working with a very receptive staff, and will return for another session in 2020. We are also available to provide support and mentoring for the school counselor, who will act as the Restorative Justice coordinator within the school.

This was the first of what will hopefully become more such trainings, enabling teachers and school staff to implement restorative practices on a daily basis, and integrate them into the overall culture of a school. It’s a new and exciting way for us to fulfill our mission.

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 fifteen case referrals from the Henrico County and Richmond City Juvenile Court Service Units for our Family Group Conference, with ten cases successfully completed and four ongoing. 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.

Stories and Testimonials



Immanuel Bey (*VCRJ volunteer facilitator*) – My experiences working in this field have served as evidence to me that Almighty GOD, my Father, has surely called me to this work.

I have seen families and single mothers endure drastic life changes due to actions perpetrated by their children. Mothers have sometimes lost their employment, their place of residence, as well as their peace of mind as a result of enormous amounts of stress. The pressure of keeping daily appointments with child advocate services, counselors, and even probation officers and various law officials has swiped away life as they once knew it to be. They have been left with the dutiful task of trying to reform their troubled or challenged adolescent, while simultaneously holding their own psyche together. However, in spite of their previous conflict that has created much dissension and discord, some of the teens, both offenders and victims, have been able to reconcile, along with their parents.

Restorative justice is very much needed in this day and age, since human beings need to be more than just case numbers or legally termed and categorized. Restorative justice gives those families a much-needed voice, especially to those who have a passionate desire to be vindicated. In all of my meetings with the families, both sides perceive that in some way they have been wronged and seek to be justified. I believe that by the Grace of GOD Himself, both sides walk away feeling rewarded with proper recompense, and they have been able to confront the offense itself and the individual they feel has trespassed against them. There is a healing that takes place in our circle groups, or at the very least the process of healing is begun or advanced.

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 five different correctional facilities and are seeking to recruit additional volunteers so we can expand this program.

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.

Condensed Financial Information

At VCRJ, we strive to keep our expenses low, while making a deep impact. From September 2018 to August 2019, we spent \$43,539.09 to run this program – these expenses include equipment and supplies, office rent, program materials, staff salary, and volunteer training. During the same fiscal year, our organization had a total income of \$42,893.00.

About 69% 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 30% of the income came from generous contributions from individual donors, churches, and other organizations.

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 promote restorative justice in their communities. Thank you for your hard work and dedication! Further, we would like to recognize the contribution of support and encouragement from the following:

- Addison Jones
- Ann Tolleson Beane
- Anonymous Donors
- Dover Baptist Association, Ashland, VA
- Freda Thornton
- FWL & Sons
- Ginter Park Presbyterian Church, Richmond, VA
- Mount Vernon Baptist Church, Glen Allen, VA
- Ron Broocks
- Sally Molenkamp
- Sandy Elliott
- St. Paul's Baptist Church, Richmond, VA

Tribute to Judy Clarke

In August 2019, VCRJ founder Judy Clarke retired from the Board of Directors. She continues to serve as a volunteer facilitator and in an advisory capacity. Glenn Chewing, the Chairman of the Board, wrote the following reflection on her leadership and service.



Glenn Chewing (*VCRJ Board of Directors*) - Back in 2013, there was an article in our church bulletin entitled, “Do You Care?” The question – “If you’re not in any service or ministry, what excuse have you been using?” - definitely got my attention. So, I attended the learning session about the Virginia Center for Restorative Justice.

The first person I met was Judy Clarke, the creator/founder of the Virginia Center for Restorative Justice. She was cordial, engaging, and passionate. Judy had a way of making me her primary focus. She is good at doing that! I accompanied her as she visited several prisons. Judy displayed so well her ability to make inmates feel worthy and accepted. She gave each one her undivided attention. Judy effectively facilitated a class that builds character, and inmates participated in the discussion of important values needed to handle conflict. Judy would light up when an inmate opened up and shared his or her story. She encouraged inmates to share, believing that sharing our stories brings healing. Whenever I hear the words “restorative justice,” Judy Clarke immediately comes to my mind.

Judy has made a big difference in the lives of trained volunteers and in the lives of hundreds and hundreds of prisoners in Virginia.

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