



RESTORATIVE JUSTICE R E V I E W

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE COMMUNITY ACTION, INC.
SERVING MINNEAPOLIS NEIGHBORHOODS SINCE 1997

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Spring 2006

RJCA Holds First Community Conference in North Minneapolis

On March 14th, 2006, a 25-year old man was caught trying to buy marijuana at Broadway & Logan, in the Jordan neighborhood. He was charged with a misdemeanor in Hennepin County District Court and chose to resolve his offense by participating in a community conference on April 20, 2006. He agreed to discuss the impact of this incident with four people from the affected community and work out an agreement to repair the harm. The group of five people met that evening at the Jordan House probation office, seated in a circle of chairs in the living room. The participants included (names changed to protect identity):

- Greg: referred participant, male, African American, grew up in North Minneapolis
- Tonia: community member, female, African American, works in Jordan neighborhood
- Kendra: community member, female, African American, own property in Jordan neighborhood
- Sara: community member, female, white, lives one block north of the Jordan neighborhood
- Walter: community member, male, African American, works with a local organization

Two trained, neutral facilitators guided the community conference. The conversation began with Greg telling about his actions and his arrest. He had just lost his job, he explained, and his ex-girlfriend wouldn't let him see his baby girl. He was stressed out. "Everybody gets used to the crime out here," he added. The facilitator asked him how he felt about what happened.

"I felt bad," Greg said. "I let my daughter down. I'm trying to show her love, give her attention. Kids, everybody needs to have attention. With my dad, I was like 'you gonna play with me?' but it wasn't like that. I don't want my daughter to be raised like that. You gotta give them attention, don't just let them go off by themselves. I talk to my daughter like an adult. She's only five, but I have to tell her what the world's like.... I think it's the end times."

The facilitator turned to the community members and asked each person how they were affected by this incident. "It hurts," Walter responded. "I was out there doing the same thing. But we can all change. It took me a long time to change. I was 45, but I *changed*. We have to be a community. We have to look out for one another. These actions are hurting the community."

"This stuff is taking away what my parents did to build up this community," Walter continued. We need to take back our community. These actions hurt us, destroys what we're trying to build. You wanna talk about this neighborhood? I grew up here. This is not *real*! You gotta make a *change*. I'm not saying this because I want to hurt you. I'm saying this because I want to *help* you. I'm saying this because it comes from the heart. This is no longer acceptable. It's gotta start with *you*."

Tonia went next. "I'm a housing inspector in this neighborhood. I see it all the time," she said. It makes me nervous, as a woman. I'm originally from Alabama. When I first moved here, I thought, 'I'm not afraid.' A few years ago I was driving on Broadway and it dawned on me... something could *happen* to me. Then what about my kids? What if somebody's looking for their next hit, and they're waiting for me? I want a young man like you to say, 'Brother, that's not the way to do it, that's not the way to be.' You say you lost your job – go get another one! You can't give up! Take something from here that's going to benefit you and your family."

Then it was Sara's turn. "We're all a community," she said to Greg. "Your life isn't separate from *mine*, or *hers*, or *hers*, or *his*. It's like a web, and we're all enmeshed. I've lived in New York and in California, and now I'm back in Minnesota. All those years on the lower east side of New York, I never felt afraid. But last summer, I was afraid to sleep in my *own* house in my *own* bed.. The neighbors talk about it: 'What's going on with these kids?' It creates a really negative picture where there doesn't need to be one... There's so much positive going on... This makes me worry about my neighbors, my students, everybody."

Continued page 3

What Is Community Conferencing?

Community conferencing is one of many restorative justice models that bring victims and offenders together to resolve specific incidents of crime or conflict. Our community conferences specifically focus on behavior that harms neighborhood livability – from public drinking and public urination to soliciting prostitution and loitering to buy or sell narcotics. Recognizing the community as a victim, each of our conferences includes people from the affected area: residents, workers, business owners, students, other neighborhood stakeholders, and/or direct victims. The conference begins with a discussion about the impact of the offense, which gives a voice to the community and educates the offender about the effects of his/her behavior on neighborhood quality of life. The conference ends with an agreement to repair the harm, typically involving community service in the neighborhood of the offense and often including apologies, donations, or personal development activities such as classes or counseling. This conferencing model was pioneered by RJCA, formerly the CCNP Restorative Justice Program, in 1997.

Thank You Community!

The following people participated in community conferences in January, February, and March:

CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS

Kathleen Anderson, Karen Barstad, Sam Bates, Shirlee Bates, Jay Bergland, Norma Booker, Josh Borowicz, Henry Bromelkamp, Troy Buhta, Jerry Clark, Carol Cook, James DeSota, Ardes Johson, Katie Hatt, Jessica Hayssen, Nancy Holmblad, Louise Huebner, Linda King, Jean Kogl, Brian Larson, Janet lee, Marie Listopad, Natalie Lupo, Lyle Make, Quinn McBreen, Joan Menken, Wendy Menken, Jan Morlock, Jan Morse, Laura Murphy, Eric Nelson, Katie Rindfleisch, Marie Saunders, Josie Shardlow, Tricia Simo Kush, Chelsea Smith, Jerie Smith, Kafi Cosette Sondai, Connie Wise Stoner, Mary Turner, Darwin Williams, and Michelle Zwicky.

Conference Facilitators

David Armbruster, Matthew Ayres, Beth Campbell, Edith-Nicole Cameron, Jerry Clark, Jodi Graham, Jessica Hayssen, Mari Johnson, Quinn McBreen, Cynthia Prosek, Sarah Schermer, Mike Stewart, Ken Strobel, Dee Tvedt, Julia Welle, Philip Wilson

Thank You Partners!

We would like to thank the following people and organizations for their contributions In January, February, and March:

REFERRAL COORDINATORS

Doug Hicks (Minneapolis Police Department), Lois Regnier Conroy, Mary Ellen Heng, Tim Richards and Elizabeth Clark (Minneapolis City Attorney's Office), Inspector Janee Harteau, Sgt. Helmer (Minneapolis Police Department, 1st Precinct), Judge R. Hopper (Hennepin County District Court), Lt. Troy Buhta (University of MN Police), Inspector Valerie Wurster, Lt. Ike de Lugo, and Carol Oosterhuis (Minneapolis Police Department, 2nd Precinct).

CONFERENCE SPACE PROVIDERS

Augustana Apartments, First Christian Church, First Congregational Church, Luxton Park Community Center, Southeast Christian Church, Van Dusen Event Center, and Westminster Presbyterian Church.

SERVICE PROJECT SUPERVISORS

Melissa Bean (MHNA), Mike Bennett (House of Charity), Terry Brooks (St. Stephens), Jane Burnham and Marji Miller (Southeast Seniors), James Desoto and Stephanie Hankerson (SECIA), Rhonda Eastland (Brian Coyle Community Center), Eric (Luxton Park Community Center), Amy Hartmann (Grace University Lutheran Church), Ardes Johnson and Matt Hill (Marcy Holmes Trash Pick-up), Katie (Ronald McDonald House), Lindsey (Habitat for Humanity), Lydia (Marcy Open School), Shardlow, Josie (Whittier Alliance), Val Smith (Youth & AIDS Project), John Sundsmo (University Recycling), Gale White (Elliot Park Neighborhood, Inc),

Feedback

The following quotes are from recent conference participant and community member surveys:

"Awesome program- I sincerely thank you for giving me a second chance and getting me involved in volunteer work for the community." (Offender)

"I believe this process was very enlightening for all participants and will most likely have a positive long term effect." (Community Member)

"I'm glad that you have this program because I learn a lot and taken this information to heart to better myself." (Offender)

"This is a great program, giving hope and encouragement to offenders." (Community Member)

"This was much more pleasant and comfortable than expected." (Offender)

"Great conference- reassuring." (Community Member)

More Funding News!

Several new grants will help RJCA achieve its two-year plan to expand service in existing areas as able and to expand services in unserved areas of the city as able:

- Minnesota Department of Corrections awarded RJCA a supplemental \$5000 grant for community outreach in North Minneapolis.
- Plymouth Congregational Church, a long-time partner and financial supporter, has pledged a \$1000 Easter gift and \$1000 Christmas offering.
- University of Minnesota included RJCA in a successful proposal for US Department of Education funding to combat underage drinking. The multi-faceted strategy combines restorative justice with intervention efforts such as health service assessments and alcohol workshops to achieve a 5% or greater reduction in high-risk drinking.

The facilitator asked if anyone had anything else to say about the impact before moving on to the agreement phase.

“My little brother’s in prison, for life,” Greg said. “He just got sentenced. My older brother just got out. When he got out, he asked me, cause I looked up to him, he said, ‘You wanna be like me?’ and I said, ‘nah, I don’t’ and it was scary, because he looks just like me, and it was like looking at me, *aged*, like I’ve done nothing with my life. I don’t want to be like that. I used to be a gang-banger, I used to play with guns, I used to do a lot of stuff, but I realized it’s not worth it. There’s too much hating going on. The world needs a lot less hating and a lot more loving.”

Tonia challenged the young man to become more positive and not be so quick to give up. Sara added, “That bag of weed, there’s nothing in it for you. Even when there’s something in it, it’s empty, you know what I mean?”

Then Walter told Greg, “I’ve been through it, and I know you can do it. How are you gonna take all that energy inside of you and focus it on something positive? It can be done. I was a serious drug addict. I would do anything to get that hit. We gotta come out of our head sometimes and get to the heart. That dirty street’s gonna be there, but we gotta change that. We gotta say ‘no more!’ I got options for you to deal with that stress. There’s some black brothers out there trying to help the young brothers get out of this madness. I’m a product of change. I was the ugliest thing out there to see. It can be done. You just need to care about yourself.”

Finally, Kendra looked Greg in the eye and said, “Young man, your life is not over. This is just a chapter. You gotta close that book and move on. Things happen for a reason. I’m a firm believer in that. Greg, you are very special, and don’t let nobody tell you different.”

When the group was ready to proceed to the agreement, the facilitator explained that the purpose of the agreement was not to create a sentence or a punishment, but to repair the harm to the community. First there was some discussion about Greg’s skills and interests. Community members learned Greg had graduated high school, had held a few jobs, and had a great passion for making music. Greg also told how he had felt a big emptiness, a big part of his life missing, when his brother went to prison, because his brother was the one he had always made music with.

Community members wanted to find some way he could pay back the community as well as find employment and fulfillment in his life. They saw an amount of great potential in him. The five participants worked out a plan by consensus, with each person giving input and final approval. They decided on eight hours of service in the neighborhood, to be performed indoors because Greg was afraid to be seen on the street. The group decided the nearby Oasis food shelf would be a good service site.

Greg also proposed personal development – something that would help him make a change in his life so he could go on to make a difference in the lives of others. They added eight or more hours with the Right Turn Project, an initiative run by African American Men Project, to empower African American Men and to help them get the resources they need. The agreement was viewed by the group as a starting point for long-term growth and change.

Show Me Results!

	<u>Year-to-Date</u>	<u>Program Total</u>
Cases Conferenced	108	1110
Community Members	43	454
Participant Satisfaction	92%	97%
Offender Compliance	89%	84%
Service Hours	483	6,875
Donations	\$740	\$7,748
Apologies	28	569

Conference Snapshot

In February, a man who was cited for underage drinking in the Marcy-Holmes neighborhood met at Luxton Park Community Center in Prospect Park with an employee of the University of Minnesota and a Lieutenant from the University of Minnesota police department. Together they discussed the impact of alcohol consumption by minors in their neighborhood as well as the impact on surrounding neighborhoods. The man fulfilled his service obligations in April by volunteering for 8 hours with the Marcy-Holmes Neighborhood Association (MHNA). He completed his agreement by writing a letter of apology to Marcy Open School. It read, in part, “*I see now that my actions were disrespectful to your community and irresponsible on my part. After eight hours of community service in your community ranging from placing flyers on your doors for a safety meeting to picking up trash, I’ve come to feel a little more involved in the community and I will most likely think twice before acting in the manner that I did.*”

To close the conference, the facilitator went around the circle once more, asking each person whether he/she had any final questions or comments.

“Thank you for being nice to me,” Greg said to the group. “Ain’t too many people been nice to me, and it feels good.”

Pulling her chair forward, Tonia said, “Young man, the time is *now*. I’m gonna talk to you like I talk to my 17-year-old son.” She urged him to get serious about his life and about his desire for change. “Everything is laid out for you,” she emphasized.

Finally, Kendra looked at Greg and said, “You need to be your own hero. You need to love yourself. Look in the mirror every day and say something positive about yourself. Get a job and make some money and have fun *the legal way*. Thank you for listening to us.”

The group concluded their conference by signing the agreement and sharing refreshments. Walter walked up to Greg and gave him a long hug. Ten minutes later, the participants thanked one another and shook hands before saying goodbye.

WHAT IS RESTORATIVE JUSTICE?

Restorative justice is a way of doing justice that tries to repair the harm of crime or conflict.

- Victims have a voice in the process
- Offenders take steps to repair harm
- Offenders are reintegrated
- Relationships are strengthened

RJCA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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INDIVIDUAL DONORS

We would like to express our gratitude to these individual donors for recently making a financial contribution to RJCA: Carl Allen, Dennis Avery, Karen Barstad, Jan Morlock, June Nobbe, Michael Skara, Kendre Turonie, Timothy Watercoft, Lindsay Williams, and Phil and Donna Wilson. *THANK YOU!*

Restorative Justice Community Action, Inc.
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GET INVOLVED!

YOU CAN PARTICIPATE

You can respond directly to crimes that have an impact on the livability of your community:

- Participate as a community member** in conferences with your neighbors to tell how local incidents affect you.
- Become a trained conference facilitator** to help guide the conference process.
- Identify service projects for offenders** so they can make amends to the community they harmed.
- Spread the word** to involve new community members by giving us a contact or arranging a meeting.
- Provide meeting space** for a community conference.
- Serve as a translator** in a community conference. Spanish and Somali are most needed.
- Give a gift** to support the work of our organization. Checks can be made out to RJCA, which is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit. We are also able to accept gifts of stock.
- Join the Board of Directors.** Call for an application.

Please contact Kim at (612) 341-1657 (kmalrick@rjca-inc.org) or Kolu at (612) 341-1651 (kpaye@rjca-inc.org).

RJCA SERVICE AREA

We serve the Minneapolis neighborhoods of Downtown, Elliot Park, Hawthorne, Jordan, Loring Park, Marcy-Holmes, North Loop, Prospect Park, Southeast Como, Steven Square-Loring Heights, University of Minnesota, West Bank, and Whittier. If you are affected by livability crime in any of these neighborhoods, RJCA invites you to participate in the justice process. Just give us a call!

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