



Peer Mediation Helps Resolve Conflicts in Local Schools

By Marie-Jose van der Zande

In the spring of 2007, CJI received funding from the Ministry of Children and Youth Services (MCYS) to implement and grow our School-Based Mediation Program in the Waterloo Region. The initiative provides an opportunity for youth aged 12-17 attending area schools to take responsibility for harmful actions in a positive way that promotes healing for all involved.

Last year, two students had a conflict. They had been friends for number of years and were now in grade 12. Dave found Jeff's email account password and thought it would be funny to change the password so that Jeff could not access his account. That day, Jeff was working on a major essay that was due the next day. He sent it to his email address from school and that evening was unable to

access the essay to work on it! Jeff was beside himself. The paper was worth 30% of his mark and was going to help him get into university.

The teacher was not amused when Jeff explained that he could not access the essay. Unless Jeff submitted it that day he would lose marks. A few people told Jeff what Dave had done. He got in touch with Dave and was able to access his account again. He submitted his paper but it was not as complete as he would have liked. Jeff was reeling from the incident and felt betrayed by Dave.

This is exactly the type of conflict that mediation can help resolve. The CJI program uses Peer Mediation or Restorative Justice Circles to effectively deal with a variety of incidents including minor assaults, fighting, stealing, vandalism, racial and cultural confrontations, relationship

Continued next page

Employability Forum for Federally-Sentenced Women

By Sandra Reimer

On Monday, February 7, 2011, a crowd of over 150 people were moved by the powerful first-hand accounts of women who struggled to gain employment after being incarcerated.

Community and business leaders, Correctional Services Canada (CSC) staff, volunteers, academics and members of the media attended the first Employability Forum for Federally-Sentenced Women held at Bingemans in Kitchener. CJI hosted the event in partnership with the Waterloo Region Crime Prevention Council and CSC.

David Dick, Warden of Grand Valley Institution for Women (GVI) opened the morning event and Leanne Kilby, Executive Director of Elizabeth Fry Society of Hamilton was the keynote speaker. Jennifer Oades, Canada's Deputy Commissioner for Women, gave the closing remarks.

Participants listened to three panel discussions:

1. Life, Work and Education in GVI – Two currently incarcerated women and two GVI staff spoke about education and training offered at the women's prison.

2. What it's Really Like Trying to Get a Job After Prison – Four women who have been released from GVI spoke about the challenges in obtaining gainful employment.

3. Stories of Successful Employment – Two women and their employers spoke about their jobs and what it is like hiring someone with a criminal record.

Continued next page

Peer Mediation Introduced at Cambridge Elementary Schools

In 2010, CJI introduced Peer Mediation to two elementary schools in the Cambridge area. We knew that building capacity in the program would mean bringing in CJI volunteers to help train and support the program. Initially, this was a bit of a challenge for Service Coordinator Marie-Jose (MJ) van der Zande who had not worked with the younger age group regularly. But after training about 20 eager mediators, they were out on the school yard managing conflict everywhere!

"We were very pleased to see how well the 'peacekeepers' were received by both staff and students," said MJ. The kids were managing everyday conflicts like who gets the soccer ball first, snowball fights, and pushing and shoving.

Before the end of June 2011, two more elementary schools will bring mediation to the school yard. A suitable and willing volunteer from CJI's volunteer roster will be given the job of working with the students weekly or bi-weekly to support and mentor them throughout the year.

Continued from front page

difficulties, harassment, and gossip. CJI-trained and supervised student mediators facilitate less serious cases, while adult mediators (from the school and community) handle more complex situations.

The program has been well received by both the public and separate school boards and is growing every year. Peer Mediation was launched in three Catholic high schools in the first year and now operates in three elementary schools and five high schools. This

year we plan to expand to four elementary schools and six high schools.

School administrators and guidance staff handle most referrals to the program. The majority have been very receptive to outside help as they resolve conflicts—especially complex cases. The Waterloo Regional Police also refer school-based conflicts to CJI. At times, School Resource Officers have used CJI's mediation services to resolve conflicts without laying charges. This brings a situation to a peaceful end and saves everyone a lot of time and energy that it would otherwise take to go through the courts.

Students have expressed that learning about conflict resolution has helped them in their personal lives as well as at school. This was the case for Jeff and Dave. During the mediation that Jeff requested, Dave apologized. He could not really justify

his actions and wished he had never seen Jeff's password. It cost him dearly. He had lost the respect of the teachers and his friends. Jeff received the acknowledgement and apology he had hoped for and started to recover from the disappointment he felt. It would take them a while to rebuild trust, but they were definitely relieved that this was behind them before they left high school. ●●●

Classroom Meetings Help Prevent Conflicts

CJI's School-Based Mediation program is not limited to the peer mediation program. In 2010, we introduced the classroom meetings model. During these weekly or impromptu meetings, students and the teacher discuss decisions around classroom rules, breaking of those rules, or simple things like where to go for a class trip.

Everyone has a say and a "talking piece" is used to designate who is speaking while the others listen. The talking piece gets passed from person to person. It takes a few meetings for students to adjust to this style of communicating, but it isn't long before students expect the circle to happen and often ask teachers to have more circles!

The circles foster connections and understanding among students as they listen to each other. The meetings build a safe micro-community that helps prevent conflicts. "A more connected school is a more peaceful school," said Marie-Jose van der Zande, CJI's Peer Mediation Coordinator.

Employability Forum Continued from front page



Two formerly incarcerated women and their employers talk about hiring someone with a criminal record.

Following the panels, a CSC Community Employment Coordinator and Community Parole Officer talked about the support they provide for employers who hire people with criminal records. In small groups and in a large group feedback session, participants shared what they learned during the forum and talked about action they could take. "Many people indicated that they are interested in supporting employment for federally sentenced women – the community is very motivated to help," said Julie Thompson, CJI's Director of Programs.

As a result of the event, several employers connected with CSC staff to discuss hiring incarcerated women. In addition, a working group is being developed that will continue to help reduce barriers to employment faced by the women. ●●●

"I am Not my mistakes"

One message was reiterated time and time again by the women who took to the microphone to share their story: "I am not my mistakes."

Krista Davies was trained as a dental assistant when she was involved in a crash that killed a 21-year-old man. She was charged with criminal negligence causing death and served her sentence at Grand Valley.

It's been more than three years since she completed her parole, but it's still a struggle for her to feel trusted and accepted and find employment.

"Needing the skills and then finding someone who would believe in me were two totally different things," she said. "It still is today ... just getting a chance and an interview has been tough for me."

From an article by Melinda Dalton in *The Waterloo Region Record*. Complete article at <http://bit.ly/employmentforum>



Come visit our reorganized library

Ingrid von Hausen is a retired librarian who began revamping and updating the CJI library in October 2009. Coming in two mornings per week for over a year, she weeded the vast number of books, articles, and magazines. This unique collection contains books, magazines, DVDs, and CDs on a variety of topics related to restorative justice, including: counselling, sexual abuse and models of restorative justice. Whether you are writing a paper or an article, or want to further your own understanding, this collection is a one-of-a-kind resource.

Raising CJI's Profile: Can't Say We Didn't Try

By Gary Nyp

We sent what we believed to be the most compelling of letters, highlighting her affinity with restorative justice in general and, in particular, the plight of the male survivors of childhood sexual abuse.

We tugged at her altruistic heartstrings, enlightened her about CJI's ongoing financial needs and its quest to broaden the voice of restorative justice.

But about four weeks later, we got our reply: Oprah is not able to come.

Yes, we tried to get Oprah Winfrey—the Oprah Winfrey—to come to our region. Sure it was an ambitious quest. But a trio of CJI staff members, determined to enhance CJI's profile while raising much-needed funds to support our numerous programs, gave it their best shot.

The plan was to bring her here sometime early next year and hold an event for the ages. We envisioned a packed house of ticket-buying individuals eager to be in Oprah's presence as

she extolled the virtues of restorative justice. We dreamed of a litany of corporate sponsors, not to mention a strong media presence and national attention.

But it seems Oprah has other things to attend to these days, what with starting her own network and all.

But we're not done yet. We're still thinking big, determined to host a major fundraising and awareness event in aid of CJI's many restorative justice initiatives. A CJI committee continues to scour a list of potential speakers or entertainers and send out more letters.

In the meantime, we're open to ideas. Got connections? Know high-profile people who could help CJI grow its vision of "The Just Community"? Contact Todd Perreault: toddp[at]cjiwr[dot]com ●●●



Pilot Support Group for Men with Intellectual Disabilities Who Have Sexually Offended

CJI's Revive program supports families, individuals, and groups that have been impacted by sexual trauma. Specifically we work with people who have offended sexually or who are struggling with unhealthy sexual behaviours as they learn to make safe, healthy choices.

We often receive requests from the community to assist adult males with intellectual disabilities. In December of 2010 we received a request from the Assistant Area Manager of Probation and Parole services to develop and deliver a pilot ten-week educational group for these men who have sexually offended. During the program development phase, we consulted with a community resource person from Developmental Services Access Centre to ensure effective delivery of services to this group.

The group ran Wednesday evenings from March 2nd to May 4th, 2011. Support workers were invited to attend three special information sessions that ran concurrently with the men's group. Information sessions for the workers and family provided them with knowledge and understanding about sexual offending behaviours and related group content such as boundaries, offence cycles, healthy sexuality and relapse prevention. This in turn helped them understand how to assist the men in making healthy choices and integrating what they have learned in the group, into their daily lives. ●●●

There is clearly an identified need for support services for persons with intellectual disabilities who have offended sexually, or who are struggling with unhealthy sexual behaviours. Yet, ours is the only agency in Waterloo-Wellington area that is providing support group services. The combination of educating the group members and the support workers is a key component in reducing harm in the future.

—Leslie Waye, Service Coordinator, Revive Program

"I enjoy coming to group. I like it because I am learning. I think it is helping me."

"I learned more rules about private boundaries. I like the other participants."

"Thank you for providing such a great service to our community. The information will definitely help our clients and give our staff tools to assist the clients."

—Personal Support Worker

Give to your community and help make our region a safer place.

We are thankful to all the members, partners and financial supporters on whom we rely to operate our valuable programs. Each donation we receive assists us in recruiting volunteers and ultimately results in a peaceful solution being brought to a situation that was on course for more pain and conflict. Please consider supporting us with a one-time or monthly contribution.


CHRIS COWIE
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CJI

volunteer

There are many ways for you to become involved:

Mediate conflict situations involving families, groups, neighbours, employees, etc.

Facilitate groups for people who have survived sexual abuse or people who have offended sexually

Participate in the weekly recreation program at Grand Valley Prison for Women

Become a reintegration Support Circle member for a woman leaving prison

Present a workshop ~ Assist with fundraising ~ Serve on a committee
Provide office assistance

Contact **Peggy LaFlamme** by email [peggyl\[at\]cjiwr\[dot\]com](mailto:peggyl[at]cjiwr[dot]com) or phone 519-744-6549 ext. 208. Volunteer application forms are available on our website www.cjiwr.com

to donate

To make a donation by phone, please contact Sheila at 519-744-6549 ext. 202

Please make cheques payable to "CJI" and mail to: CJI, 49 Queen Street North Kitchener, ON N2H 2G9 or donate online www.cjiwr.com

CJI Volunteers and Supporters Contribute to a Just Community

A letter from Executive Director Chris Cowie

Each April, organizations in the voluntary sector recognize the contributions of volunteers. We had a chance to formally thank our volunteers at a wonderful appreciation event on April 14. Naturally, this got me thinking a lot about the important role that volunteers play at CJI. The more I thought about them, the more thankful I became and the more I wanted to bring some things to light for the entire community of CJI supporters.



Think about this: approximately 10,000 volunteer hours are invested in furthering the cause of Restor-



Some of the dedicated CJI staff and volunteers (top to bottom, left to right): Judy Pidgeon, Sandra Foe and Peggy LaFlamme (staff); Kim Kool (staff) and Steph Butler, John Mohle and Cathy Downer; Kelly Rico and Tim O'Neil, Uma Arya and Koki Khanna, John DeBoer and Asnake Dabala.

ative Justice through CJI each year. That is a staggering amount of work! I know that many organizations boast a lot of volunteer hours. But at CJI most of our volunteers have to qualify for their service by completing rigorous training, which they need to pay for themselves. Imagine the dedication of those who have willingly paid over \$600 simply to qualify for a volunteer position.

Indulge me for a moment as I extrapolate a little from this. I'll use our Community Mediation Services program as an example. We have two Service Coordinators whose combined job it is to ensure that any conflict situation or Victim Offender diversion, referred to us through the City Bylaw division or the Courts, is mediated with a view toward resolution. Last year we had 166 cases referred to us, representing a wide variety of conflicts and crimes. Each of these cases requires the work of two qualified volunteer mediators who gather information, complete thorough case development, and then mediate solutions and/or reconciliation in one or more meetings with those directly involved.

Okay, here's the amazing part. When combined, the total amount of staff and volunteer time required to complete one case is 34 hours of work. Considering the total program budget for our Community Mediation Services program, we repair damaged relationships and bring resolution to serious conflicts for a grand total of \$698 per case. That's everything! That covers staff wages, administrative costs, rent, utilities, training, supplies—the entire works. Picture for a moment the alternative: a courtroom, at least two attorneys, a judge, various other staff along with an invisible army of workers and infrastructure supporting the system. How far does \$698 go in that scenario?

And here's the best part: we know that the restorative process we facilitate for pennies is also effective. It works. It transforms lives and relationships. We see this happen all the time. A victim identifies with the humanity in someone they had never expected they could. Or long-standing feuds between neighbours come to peaceful resolution. Sometimes the transformation begins as an offender becomes aware of the true impact of what they've done.

So now, on behalf of all the staff, board and volunteers I want to express gratitude to all of you who support us financially. I want you to be as encouraged as we are as you read about the fabulous return on investment that your contributions leverage. I visualize the relationship between those who support us financially and those who volunteer as a matching contribution arrangement. Each donation we receive enables us to mobilize additional volunteers. As the volunteers enjoy a rich and meaningful experience they contribute to an increasingly just community. ●●●



Chris Cowie congratulates Phil Maier (right) on 14 years of volunteer service with CJI.

Engage with CJI Online Using Social Media



CJI has joined Facebook, Twitter and YouTube to engage in conversations and spread information about Restorative Justice (RJ) throughout the Waterloo Region and beyond. These online spaces will create forums where community members can learn more about Restorative Justice and share how they are applying it in their settings. We will also let our online communities know about RJ related events and initiatives happening in this region.

Find us on Facebook (facebook.com/thejustcommunity)
Twitter (twitter.com/ajustcommunity), or
YouTube (youtube.com/user/thejustcommunity).

We look forward to having a conversation with you!