



# Missouri Restorative Justice Initiative

Sponsored by: Center for Women in Transition



## End of Initiative Report

Dear Friends,

The Missouri Restorative Justice Initiative was developed by a working group of the Board of Directors of the Center for Women in Transition. Its goals were promoting awareness of, buy-in for and programming involving restorative justice. I was hired to implement the Initiative in November of 2004. Because the purview of the initiative was state-wide, I convened a Coalition of stakeholders from across the state to assist with the implementation. This coalition, known as the Missouri Restorative Justice Coalition, had its first meeting in March of 2005.

Over the last three years, the membership of the Coalition has changed a bit, but there has been a core group of about 20 who have been involved from the beginning and have worked arm in arm with me to implement the goals of the Initiative. I couldn't be more grateful for their presence, support and work. The Initiative could not have had nearly the impact it has had without them.

Over the three years of the Initiative, awareness of restorative justice has increased and additional restorative justice practices have blossomed. While not all of this activity can be traced to the Coalition, all of it was at least supported and encouraged by its existence, and much of it was directly connected to its work. There are now 15 Juvenile Courts in the state that have implemented restorative justice principles and

practices in the disposition of at least some of their cases. This is at least partially the result of a training sponsored by the Department of Public Safety for juvenile court personnel held in September of 2006. The Department of Corrections, in addition to its reparative program and Impact of Crime on Victims classes in the correctional facilities, is facilitating Victim

are being developed in Greene County and the City of Columbia. We now have two additional community justice centers in the state committed to facilitating restorative justice practices. And restorative justice principles and practices are being promoted in seven communities in the state and five correctional facilities, in collaboration with faith communities, through the Beyond

the Fences project sponsored by the United Methodist Church.

In addition to the Coalition, I am grateful to the wonderful partners we have had over these three years who have helped



Members of the Missouri Restorative Justice Coalition

us in many ways to promote restorative justice awareness. Special recognition goes the Community of Christ, a faith organization that dedicated its 2006 Peace Colloquy to restorative justice and brought 600 people together, exposing them to a myriad of informative workshops and powerful presentations. I am also grateful for the funders of this project, the Sisters of Mercy, St. Louis and the Sisters of St. Joseph, without which the work could not have been done.

Offender Dialogue in crimes of severe violence. The Division of Probation & Parole of the Department of Corrections, in addition to its reparative boards, is also making Impact of Crime on Victims classes available through all of its district offices. Several school districts in Missouri have now incorporated restorative justice practices in their curricula and in the way they are responding to disciplinary cases. I expect more of these practices to develop in schools due to a workshop sponsored by the Center for Safe Schools and funded by the Department of Public Safety, which was held recently. Restorative justice practices are being used or developed in several adult courts, including Victim Impact Panels, which are being used in Lincoln and Greene Counties, and Victim/Offender Dialogues which

The following pages chronicle our history, achievements and impact on the community. Thank you for your continued support of restorative justice in Missouri.



Yours,

Nina Balsam, J.D.  
MORJI Director

# MORJI Research Overview

In 2003, the MORJI determined the need to measure the success of their initiative. Specifically, the Initiative was looking for some measure of accomplishment for the following goal:

By December 31, 2007, there will be an increase of:

- a. 25% in the number of Missouri stakeholders who recognize the term "restorative justice."
- b. 20% in the number of Missouri stakeholders able to identify one of the benefits of restorative justice.
- c. 15% in the number of Missouri stakeholders who acknowledge a preference for restorative over punitive justice.

Dr. Gene Bonham, University of Central Missouri, and Professor Joanne Katz, Missouri Western State University, were selected to survey stakeholders throughout the state. In Year One, they sought to create a baseline of knowledge prior to programming, and then in Years Two and Three they aimed to measure whether or not growth had occurred. A questionnaire was developed and sent out initially in Spring 2005.

The sample of stakeholders included the following:

Law Enforcement: including police departments and sheriff's offices.

Corrections: including probation and parole as well as prisons.

Courts: including defense attorneys, judges, prosecutors, juvenile officers and private defense lawyers.

Community: including community action groups, churches, newspapers, and philanthropic givers.

Policy Makers: including Missouri Senators, Missouri Legislators and state of Missouri department heads.

Education: including colleges/universities and public schools (K-12).

Victim Advocates: including domestic violence victim's advocates.

In Year One, surveys were sent to over 1,004 stakeholders in Missouri. Responses were received from 410 stakeholders, which formed the basis for the baseline research. In Year Two, a similar survey was sent to stakeholders. Approximately 1,050 surveys were sent out and 309 were returned.

In Year Three the methodology was modified slightly. In an effort to gain more detail from respondents, an interview model was adopted. It was hoped that interviewing stakeholders would provide more context within which to interpret results. 152 interviews were completed.

After three years of research, we found that while the knowledge of the term Restorative Justice had not grown, the acceptance of the concept had. Approximately 50% of those interviewed in all three years knew the term Restorative Justice. However in Year Three, after the interviewees were given a definition of restorative justice, we found that there was great acceptance of the concept.

Each respondent was asked if she or he thought this would benefit the victim. In Year Three, 73 percent of the stakeholders interviewed said they thought it would benefit the victim. When comparing it to similar questions from Years One and Two (written survey), only 48 percent had thought it would be of a benefit.

When asked if it would benefit the offender, 91 percent of those interviewed felt it would. This was in comparison to a 36 percent average in the previous written surveys. And when asked if it would benefit the community, 80% agreed that it would. In Years One and Two only 38% had answered that positively.

Finally, the stakeholders interviewed were asked if there would be situations where they would prefer restorative justice over a more traditional response of our criminal justice system, 65% said yes. There were many qualifications that limited the scope of this agreement, which could be found in the documented comments from the stakeholders. However, in previous years, only 20% felt that this would be the preferred.

The outcomes of the research showed that progress had been made. However after all of this data gathering, we felt that there are perhaps additional indicators which need to be looked at in order to determine if in fact the objectives of the MORJI had been met. We cited the number of articles, conferences, trainings and new programs which had been started during the time of the Initiative. The role of the Restorative Justice Coalition and Director Nina Balsam in the state are indicators of continually growing awareness and acceptance of restorative justice. Finally, the number of colleges and universities that are including restorative justice in the curriculum for future professionals is a sign of the continuing growth within the state.



*Left: Lead researchers, Dr. Gene Bonham and Professor Joanne Katz*



*Right: Members of the Planning and Advisory Committees at the Initiative's final meeting at the end of year three.*

# History of the Restorative Justice Initiative

By: Sharon Schmitz, RSM

The mission of the Center for Women in Transition includes the promotion of restorative justice.

In 2002, Sister of Mercy Sharon Schmitz, co-founder of the Center for Women in Transition, and Jackie Peterson, chair of the Center's Advisory Committee recruited Pam Caraffa, an organizational psychologist, and strategists Chip Marvin and Lawrence O'Neill to brainstorm ideas for moving restorative justice forward in Missouri.

This small group recruited stakeholders, diverse in race, gender and religion, to create a plan and processes to further restorative justice in Missouri. Those enlisted were Al Akerson, Barbara Baker, Eric Bauman, Charles Bryson, Julia Childrey, Barbara Ge-

hringer, Kate Mansfield, Rose McLarney, Judy Pannett, Quinton Richardson, Becca Stewart, the late Ed Stout and Dorcas Wilkinson (representing victims, universities, re-entry programs, public relations, offenders, mediators, corrections, city officials, churches and businesses). Most of the persons contacted readily agreed to serve on the Task Force. The exception was law enforcement which, at the time, was dealing with the aftermath of the September 11 disaster.

Task Force members educated themselves about restorative justice and designed a three year plan, entitled the Missouri Restorative Justice Initiative, to educate Missourians

about restorative justice.

A grant was received to begin the project and, in November 2004, Nina Balsam was hired to direct the initiative.

As required by the plan, an Advisory Committee of Stakeholders guided Balsam's work. This Advisory Committee included Sgt. Bob Catlett, from law enforcement and several of the original Task Force members. Some persons in the original group had to resign and were replaced by Kathy Tofall, Victims Advocate, Jeananne Markway, Department of Corrections, Carolyn Golden, Center for Women in Transition, Laretta Coleman, Courts, and Dana Klar, Native American Studies, Washington University.

## Reflections from Sr. Rose McLarney



The outcomes of the Restorative Justice Initiative look different than the original thinking of the planning group; however, the outcomes are beyond expectation. A major

reason for this was the decision to hire Nina Balsam as the Director. Her experience in working with a state wide coalition, her ability to research and be credible on restorative justice and her persistence in trying a new avenue when obstacles were

encountered were invaluable to the project. A second major factor of the success was the coalition which consisted of the key persons connected with agencies and groups.

Some of the original ideas from the planning group were on target and others implemented in a totally new manner. Identifying groups and individuals who had a particular interest in or were providing restorative justice practices helped tremendously. One example of a different direction that was taken was to provide technical assistance to groups

desiring to implement a restorative justice practice rather than giving them implementation kits. Throughout the three years, people came in and out of the project, unexpected breakthroughs happened, and the momentum kept building. There is no doubt that the Initiative was instrumental in the advancement of restorative justice in Missouri and well worth the resources utilized.

Special thanks goes to the original planning task force, the funders, the coalition and statewide partners.

## Looking Towards the Future

Because of the success of the Initiative, many in the state are primed to take the next steps to insure that Restorative Justice Principles and Practices are imbedded in institutions and systems throughout the state. The following are efforts that are currently underway:

1. A committee has been convened to plan for state-wide training for facilitators of Victim/Offender Dialogue so that prosecutors, adult courts, juvenile courts, Probation & Parole and others have resources to which to refer cases.
2. A committee of representatives of stakeholders in adult courts has been convened to plan for bringing adult stakeholders together at a state-wide meeting to promote the use of Restorative Justice Practices in adult courts.
3. Discussions are taking place with one of the law schools about the development of a Restorative Justice clinic where students will learn how to facilitate Restorative Justice Practices and assist with this facilitation in programs in the community.
4. Training for facilitators of Victim Offender Dialogue in crimes of severe violence is being planned by the Department of Corrections.
5. A workshop for school administrators, guidance counselors, and safety officers was held recently. This has increased interest in schools in using Restorative Justice Practices, such as classroom and discipline circles. Training for circle facilitators is being planned for next year to help fulfill the need by schools, communities, and faith communities for these resources.

# Missouri Restorative Justice Initiative Legacy Reports

MORJI played a very influential role in the work of many individuals and organizations over the past three years. Here, learn how a few individuals worked with the Coalition to work for change.

**Char Berquist** is the Director of the Office of Dispute Resolution Center at Missouri State University. The Center has historically conducted mediations in a variety of venues and conducted mediation training. The Juvenile Court in Green County was anxious to start conducting Victim/Offender Dialogue (VOD) in some of their cases, but did not have the resources to do so. Char and the relevant people at the Juvenile Court were introduced to each other through the efforts of the Initiative. Char held a training for facilitators of VOD and now has over 20 volunteers conducting VOD of cases referred by the juvenile court. In addition, through the efforts of the Initiative, Char began working with Darrell Moore, the prosecutor in Greene County, and Char's volunteers will be starting to facilitate cases diverted by Darrell's office. Char is also assisting with planning a state-wide training for new facilitators of VOD so that this restorative justice practice can be more available in the state.

**Alison Brown** is the Director of the Alternatives to Violence and Abuse Program, a batterers' intervention program, at Bridgeway Counseling Center. At the request of the Circuit Court in Lincoln County, Alison, Nina and another Coalition member, Charla Harbour, met with Judge Amy Kinker to develop a domestic violence restorative justice project, Victim Impact Panels (VIP), in cases where orders of protection had been granted against the offenders. The impetus for the project was to increase offender accountability, while facilitating victim healing and allowing victims the opportunity to help other victims. Funding was applied for and received from the Domestic Relations Resolution Fund from the Office of State Court Administrator. The panels provide an opportunity for victims to talk about the impact on the crime on them and for perpetrators to understand the impact and be less likely to recidivate. Victim Impact Panels have now become a part of the AVA Program. One panel has already been held and preliminary feedback shows that it has positively impacted both victim/survivors and the perpetrators. In addition to the three panels that

will be held through the grant period, a video tape of portions of the panels and interviews with community members will be made and used for educational purposes to raise awareness about the impact of domestic violence.

**Chris Deason** is the Mentor Coordinator at the Center for Women in Transition and has been working with Monica Chwasinski, Mary Hellwig and Nina on developing a Restorative Justice program at CWIT. The program will consist of two, one and a half hour sessions for CWIT's mentees devoted to answering the harm questions that are asked with Restorative Justice Practices: who was harmed, how were they harmed, how should the harm be repaired and who should be involved in repairing the harm. Thereafter, the victims of the mentees' crimes will be contacted by the Crime Victim Advocacy Center to see if they would be interested in participating in a Victim/Offender Dialogue. The reasons for development of this program are to increase accountability on the part of the mentees, increase understanding by the mentees of the impact of their crime, decrease the likelihood of re-offense and facilitate greater healing for victims and of relationships.

**Mary Hellwig** is employed by the St. Louis Mennonite Peace Center and has been a strong partner with the Initiative in the development of Community Conflict Services of Metropolitan St. Louis (CCS). It has taken less than two years to make the vision for this organization into a reality, with an office, volunteers, limited funding and the fundamentals necessary to create a legal nonprofit entity. CCS is a community justice center modeled on similar centers in Vermont and other states, providing opportunities for communities to be involved in fashioning alternative responses to crime. CCS provides intake and referral services for community mediation and assists governmental and non-governmental organizations in developing restorative justice practices. It also provides training in alternative dispute resolution techniques. Some of the activities of CCS include: a school-based restorative justice project that is operational in four St. Louis middle schools, community mediation for neighbor and other disputes and a developing project with the St. Louis Police Department for referral of some cases to community mediation.

**Rev. Harold Johnson** is a retired pastor in the United Methodist Church and is currently the Coordinator of the Restorative Justice Task Force of the Missouri Conference of UMC. Aside from the many outreach efforts about restorative justice in which Rev. Johnson has participated, he is also spearheading the implementation of a project called Beyond the Fences, which has two aspects. One is to promote, in collaboration with faith communities, restorative justice principles and practices in seven communities in the state. This aspect is being accomplished through the efforts of Coalition members who live or work in those communities forming Task Teams that are working to promote restorative justice. The second aspect is supporting restorative justice practices in five correctional facilities in the state through a collaboration of community members, faith communities and the Department of Corrections. Rev. Johnson says, "The Coalition has been able to highlight, encourage and support RJ efforts being previously implemented and has multiplied both the voices and presence of Restorative Justice principles and practice in numerous places and spaces throughout the state."

**Jeananne Markway** is the Coordinator of Restorative Justice for the Missouri Department of Corrections. She oversees the Impact of Crime on Victims Classes and Reparative programs in the correctional facilities. She also develops and implements new restorative justice programming. In the last two years, Jeananne has developed Victim/Offender Dialogue within the Department and has facilitated two VODs in cases of severe violence. Four more cases are in the preparation stage. The VODs were extraordinarily successful in terms of providing a venue for the victims to get their questions answered and for the offender to understand the impact of the crime and to take responsibility. Jeananne says, "I believe this Initiative has helped tremendously in educating the citizens of Missouri on restorative justice principles and how those principles can help them with positive solutions. This Initiative has also helped identify individuals who would be willing to volunteer their time to help with restorative justice programs inside and outside the fences."