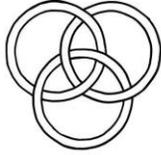


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***"If we wish to create a lasting peace, we must begin with the children."
- Mahatma Gandhi***

2008 ANNUAL REPORT

As we shared in our Thanksgiving letter to friends and supporters, we are grateful for many things during this past year. As true throughout our almost 15 years of service, foremost for our staff and volunteers are our daily efforts to help youth step up to restore relationships and "make things right" after unwise choices at school, at home, and in the broader community. We are also thankful to be on the completed side of needed organizational changes begun in 2008, the most visible being our updated name, logo and website.

Our newest and biggest change will be our move in early January 2009 to 714 Third Street in Alamosa. Just behind Sacred Heart Church - which has so generously provided us office space for the last decade - this location keeps us close to many of our key partners and referral sources. It also satisfies the vision the staff and board set two years ago: to create a more visible and enduring Center for our restorative justice work. Our new office fits the bill. It is a great location, has private mediation space, and lends a "homey" feel suited to our work style.

The economic uncertainty of the times tempered our decision to proceed with this move. But our desire to remain proactive in our vision, despite the economy, propelled us forward. Though we have decided to defer a formal capital campaign at this time, foundations and friends have responded generously to our initial requests for financial support. With our down-payment made and a year of mortgage payments in the bank, we have confidence that we will weather the economic downturn and flourish in our new home. A history of frugal operations and a track record of grass-roots approaches to change will continue to guide our path as we face inevitable uncertainties in the months ahead. In the current political parlance, you could say we have a "yes we can" attitude and a deep reservoir of hope. We are inspired by the words of Gandhi above, as we seek restorative options for and with Valley youth.

Victim-Offender Dialogue and Restorative Discipline Conferences:

In 2008, we received 66 new referrals in this program area. With our growing emphasis on early intervention in school settings, a majority of the offenses or conflicts referred were school-site incidents. This included a combination of teen-to-teen harassment and fights, school disciplinary offenses, truancy and other school concerns. For the year, 40 referrals were initiated directly by school personnel. A large number reflect the rising trend we see in girl-to-girl aggression, beginning at the upper elementary level and extending through high school.

Of the 63 cases closed during the year, 57 completed mediation or restorative dialogue, or were otherwise successfully conciliated. We completed intakes in the remaining 6 cases, but they did not move forward due to parties choosing not to proceed, being unavailable, or other circumstances. Of the 63 cases closed, most involved teen offenders. Four cases were adult parties, including one in which parents of offending youth wanted to meet to resolve underlying concerns. Another ten involved truancy or other school behavioral concerns for elementary age children, in which parents were primary participants on behalf of their children. Fourteen cases remain open and will carry into 2009, including a set of cases from 2007 in which we are doing long-term restitution management.

Our referral level stayed fairly steady throughout the year, with cases received from most counties in the valley. The majority came from our close partnership with the Alamosa School District. We also received referrals from the District Attorney's office, Probation, and Alamosa Municipal Court Judge Amanda Pearson.

Paula Medina continues to provide oversight to this program area, as well as general coordination of our volunteer mediators. We have a small, but dedicated group of volunteers. Without them, we could not serve our widespread communities as effectively. We will be training new mediators again in February 2009. We hope this will add additional volunteers, especially those with bi-lingual skills. We are grateful to the Immigrant Resource Center for providing interpreters throughout the year for families who speak Spanish and Q'anjob'al.

School Programs:

During 2008, we devoted a significant amount of time to school programming. Claire McArdle has provided over-all coordination of school services since Erin Kenzie left in March. As noted above, many of our case referrals were generated through school contacts. In addition, we have expanded our services to include truancy mediation and Girls Circles. We continue to offer peer mediation training and anti-bullying education.

Truancy Mediation—In early 2008, our staff became involved in addressing truancy concerns within the Alamosa district. A truancy mediation modeled was introduced, geared especially to early truancy interventions at the elementary level. Four cases for K-1 were piloted last Spring. This Fall, several additional mediations have been held between school administrators, teachers and parents of elementary students, with a high level of success.

Girls Circle Model – Our newest program is Girls Circle. In response to an increase of girl-to-girl aggression, we partnered with Alamosa schools, Mental Health, Tu Casa, and Boys and Girls Clubs to explore this intervention model. With a generous grant from the SB 94 Youth Services committee, we were able to invite national Girls Circle trainers to train 35 Valley women last May. As a result of this training, numerous circles are being facilitated around the Valley through collaborative efforts. The partners continue to meet regularly to brainstorm where circles might be needed and help make them possible. Our staff had the opportunity to facilitate three circles in Alamosa with Tu Casa staff late last Spring and through the summer. We have also matched volunteers to facilitate a fourth circle this Fall. Since then, we and our partners have initiated and/or helped to facilitate Girls Circles for middle and high school girls in a variety of settings throughout the Valley. The partnership hopes to expand to offer Boys Council, a related model, in 2009. Our goal is to help oversee the development and implementation of these proven models, by supporting facilitator skill-

development, matching facilitators to sites, collecting impact data, and generally allowing these models to grow organically in a variety of youth-serving sites around our valley.

Peer Mediation – Last May, we held a half- day advanced training for the Centauri HS Peer Helpers team. In the Fall, we hosted several additional full-day trainings for area high schools and middle schools. High schools included Moffat, Center, Creede, Sangre de Cristo, Sanford, Mountain Valley, Centauri, Centennial, Sierra Grande, Sargent, and Antonito. Middle schools were Del Norte and Ortega. Over 135 students, along with adults sponsors, attended the Fall trainings. Two additional high schools and middle schools are considering early 2009 training dates.

Other Training Activities – Our staff provided professional development and consultation throughout the year for educators in various public school, after-school and higher education settings. This included special training on restorative discipline for all staff of the Alamosa district and the Boys & Girls Clubs of the San Luis Valley, as well as Olweus bullying prevention training for all staff of the Crestone charter school. Additional shorter bullying-related trainings were provided throughout the year, in coordination with Boys & Girls Clubs, the Colorado After-school Network, the Parent Institute, Casa Start, and Polston Elementary parents.

Parent-Teen Mediation:

Parent-teen mediations continue to be an additional part of the Center's case work. Despite limited referrals, these interventions continue to provide us with rewarding and thought-provoking experiences, as we assist families with some of the rough spots of adolescent development. It is the richness of these cases that keeps the program alive, despite its low numbers. We continue to look for ways to outreach to the community about the availability of this important service. We had 4 new referrals this year that made it to mediation and 2 referrals carried over from 2007. We have served tri-lingual families, families that are severely estranged, families that had little hope for reconciliation, and those that just needed to sit down face-to-face for healing of parent and teen relationships to begin. We are thankful for our volunteers and for the support of the board in continuing this small but important program.

Other Community Involvements:

Claire McArdle volunteered weekly throughout 2008 with Alamosa County Judge Mike Gonzales in the small claims arena. She mediates approximately 2 cases per court session, which work is outside our main focus area and not included in our case statistics. However, we consider this a contribution we can make to strengthening our partnership with the local courts. Some day it may lead to a more formal program, as we continue to explore restorative needs and options for our Valley communities. As in the past, we have also participated in various community collaboratives, including the SB94 Youth Services committee, the Immigrant Integration Project, and youth-focused prevention coalitions. We have also responded to numerous requests from ASC, area schools and other community agencies, to attend community fairs and to provide presentations to students, staff, and parents.

Prepared by the staff: Alice M. Price, Paula Medina, Claire McArdle and Renee Mackey