

# More Restorative Times

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NOVEMBER 2003

The Quarterly Newsletter of the  
Eau Claire County Restorative Justice Program



## Otto Bremer Generously Supports ECCRJP

### ECCRJP Rundown:

Our program has accepted juvenile referrals since August 2002. To date we have received 74 total referrals with an average of about 12 per quarter. At the end of October, we have already had 11 such referrals that month alone. So far, our two staff members and various volunteers have mediated 14 successful Victim Offender Conferences, mentored 18 youths through the completion of their programming, and currently have 22 pending cases. With expanded programming options and new referral sources, our numbers are drastically increasing monthly.



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The Otto Bremer Foundation, now approaching its 60<sup>th</sup> year of community support, provides much appreciated assistance to many rural non-profit community programs in the Midwest region of Minnesota, Wisconsin, North Dakota, and Montana. The Foundation's earnings through investments in the Bremer Financial Corporation, a well-respected and renowned bank holding company, are utilized to support the generous grants to many local organizations throughout these states.

The mission statement of the Foundation is to promote human rights and create opportunities for social and economic justice. On the Otto Bremer Foundation webpage, human rights are described as "rights that a person has simply because he or she is a human being. Human rights seek to ensure the dignity of every person, and are typically described as inalienable, universal, interconnected and indivisible." In many cases, promoting and advocating for human rights, rather than simply desiring protection of those rights, leads to broader systemic change. Therefore, non-profit organizations that seek to promote the dignity and active role of all local individuals in building stronger communities are appropriate under the

Otto Bremer Foundation umbrella of support.

Therefore, it is with great excitement that we announce the financial assistance of the Otto Bremer Foundation in pursuing our goals of the Restorative Justice in Eau Claire. After a meeting of the Foundation Trustees, our program was notified on October 1, 2003, that our grant proposal was approved in the amount of \$30,000. These much-appreciated funds will support our larger goal of bringing marginalized victims, first time delinquents, and vested community members together when appropriate to discuss the harm of crime and share ways that repair may occur. With the Foundation's funding, our Volunteer Coordinator position will expand and upcoming future programming growth will be ensured this next year.

Warmest appreciation to the Otto Bremer Foundation for their belief and support of restorative justice in Eau Claire County! For more information about the Otto Bremer Foundation including their rich history and goals, please visit them on the web at <http://fdncenter.org/grantmaker/bremer/home.htm>.

## What's New with Restorative Justice?

Our program, now in its second year of operation, is still picking up steam after a successful first year of implementation and learning. Throughout the Summer of 2003, through not only the hard work of our excellent Volunteer Coordinator, Jessica Schmidt, and four highly skilled and dedicated volunteers (Paul Jacobs, Jane Neilson, Susan

Saxe, and Lisa Van Sutphen), the Restorative Justice program has blossomed while operating at half-staff.

A new Program Coordinator, Mike Felton, came aboard in early September as a new community member to Eau Claire and Wisconsin. He stated that he feels not only "thankful to work with so

many talented people" but that he is energetic about the upcoming year of programming.

Look inside for the latest information on our newest program, the Accountability Workshop, as well as recent happenings and upcoming trainings and events!

## Accountability Workshop: A Restorative Approach to Thinking

Not everyone referred to our programming from Juvenile Court Intake, Department of Human Services, Children's Court, or elsewhere are appropriate for Victim/Offender Conferencing. These conferences have been our main focus as a restorative way to bring the victim and vested community members together to meet with the offender to begin to repair the harm. Our program will continue to focus on this format, but alternatives are necessary as some offenders are not appropriate for conferencing for a few different reasons.

Primarily, as this entire Restorative Justice experience is voluntary, some victims opt to not commit to conferencing, but instead offer their input for problematic areas that offenders should change. Sometimes offenders, due to lack of maturity or understanding, may be found inappropriate for conferencing during the screening process. In such instances, our program referred juveniles to our one-on-one Accountability Mentoring program, but there was still a need for further programming. Thus the Accountability Workshops were developed.



The idea of an accountability workshop was developed with input among board members, staff, and volunteers. In a group setting (8-10 juveniles), this monthly workshop will bring together components of restorative justice, namely corrective thinking and tenets of accountability and empathy building. Though the first few classes will be general in nature, the following classes will be flexible to adapt to the needs of the juveniles referred.

**Learning how one's actions create obligations for repair is a difficult, but rewarding, concept for juveniles**

This four-hour workshop requires active youth participation in understanding risky choices and consequences, practicing healthier decision making, and identifying values, beliefs and assets in one's life. Further, this workshop will broaden youth's understanding of who is actually harmed when a crime occurs and how an individual can take steps to repair this harm. Individuals will leave the workshop not only with a better grasp decision making skills, but how their behaviors create obligations and therefore accountability. Juveniles will also

## Restorative Justice Resources

We live in an information age where at the touch of a button, we can overwhelm ourselves with more reading than we have time to tackle. To be sure, much has been written about the Restorative Justice movement, its roots and philosophy, and ideas for future directions. Until we develop our website in the near future, let these websites whet your appetite for restorative justice resources. The following only represent a small sampling of information available on the web.

~Victim Offender Mediation Association: [www.voma.org](http://www.voma.org)

~Restorative Justice Online: [www.restorativejustice.org](http://www.restorativejustice.org)

~U.S. Dept. of Justice Restorative Justice: [www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/rest-just](http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/rest-just)

~ Center for Restorative Justice & Peacemaking (U of M, Dr. Umbreit) [sww.che.umn.edu/rjp](http://sww.che.umn.edu/rjp)

~Canadian Restorative Justice (Int'l flavor from our neighbors up north): [www.restorativejustice.ca](http://www.restorativejustice.ca)

For those individual seeking a more hardcopy way of understanding restorative justice, the following authors have done much in the field as far as research, implementation, philosophy of peacemaking and institutional change, and repairing criminal harm. Again, this is just a few of the many: Howard Zehr, Hal Pepinsky, Mark

## Fall Volunteer Training Offered Nov. 11 & 13

Our most recent Volunteer Training for Victim Offender Conferencing Mediators and Accountability Mentors is set to occur on Tuesday November 11th and Thursday November 13th between 5-9pm each evening.

After completing the initial 8 hour session, our volunteers are apprenticed into the program only after meeting with our Volunteer Coordinator one-on-one to ask

any questions and receive program details. The apprenticeship with either one of our highly skilled volunteers already on board, or one of our staff members will continue over the first few months until there is a skill and comfort level reached by the volunteer.

Many have asked about the amount of time commitment required from our volunteers. Anywhere between 2-10 hours a

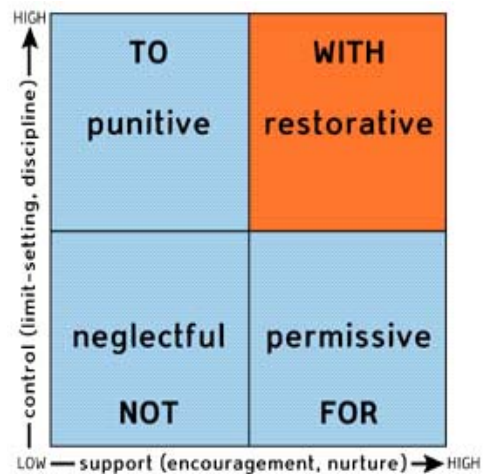
month, depending on how active one would like to become. As our juvenile referrals and programming expand, there will always be an interesting case for our volunteers to manage.

If you or someone you know is interested in becoming involved, you may contact Jessica at 835-6521 to either register for the upcoming classes or be placed on the list for our spring training.

## Volunteers Attend Wisconsin RJ Coalition Meeting

Restorative justice as a group of programs has the distinction of not only sharing information, but an extraordinary willingness to coordinate and assist each other in implementing innovative programming ideas. As such, the quarterly meeting of the Wisconsin Restorative Justice Coalition was held on October 23rd in La Crosse. Over 12 different counties were represented from across the state. Broad topics were discussed ranging from systematic change and program adaptation to innovations and challenges were discussed.

Eau Claire County RJ was impressively represented by three current volunteers, Paul Jacobs, Susan Saxe, and Lisa Van Zutphen who took time out of their busy lives to attend this meeting along with staff. These active individuals were curious about other programs and willing to share their experiences. Simply stated, our volunteers are amazing!



Restorative interaction in a nutshell.

## Much Appreciation to All Who Have Committed Themselves!

Restorative Justice is a process of spending time and energy to work with individuals and the community to positively create an environment where great things can occur. The heart that goes into this humanistic process of patience and hopefulness is best exemplified in you, the individual reading this newsletter, the individual who has positively worked for restorative changes in this community and wanted to see the fruition of these efforts.

One could say that due to the philosophy of RJ, it is one of the more interconnected ways of approaching human relationships and conflict resolution. This interconnectedness couldn't have occurred without the dedication and deep rooted support of many individuals in our judiciary, social services, juvenile justice, law enforcement, youth service realms, and in our general community. This program exists today because of the advocacy and support of many of you throughout the system who have pledged your time and energy into this idea. You know who you are and we salute you for starting and staying with this journey. Together, let's look forward to even more restorative times.

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Dedicated to building a safer community by discouraging juvenile crime, restoring victim well-being, and emphasizing direct offender accountability.

## Restorative Justice Events

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### NOVEMBER 2003

November 11th and 13th, 5pm –9pm. Volunteer training for Mediators and Mentors. Contact Jessica at 835-6521 to register or inquire about Spring 2004 training.

November 17th and 21st: International Restorative Justice Week. Look out for a renewed media campaign and speaking engagements throughout this week and month!

### DECEMBER 2003

Newly trained volunteers will begin Conferencing experience and start Accountability Mentoring. Reservations taken for Spring Training.

December 4th: First Accountability Workshop offered at Western Dairyland; contact Mike for information on referrals. Upcoming dates include January 17th, February 4th, March 31st, April 9th, and May 15th.

### JANUARY 2004

TBA: Annual Eau Claire County Restorative Justice Community meeting. Information regarding the exact date and location of this yearly event will be forthcoming. The public is invited to learn about the program, have questions answered, and to provide feedback and offer creative solutions as to how restorative justice can impact this community. **More details will be provided in our January Newsletter.**

