

January 2011

CONNECTING VOICES

the newsletter of the Greater Barre Community Justice Center

A Word from the Director

—Lori Baker

GBCJC Board of Directors:

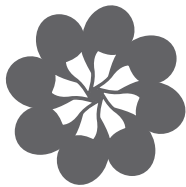
Steven MacKenzie

Michael Smith

Jim Baril

Elise Lenahan

Larry Murphy



Ed Riso

Ben Rouleau

Marlys Waller

Hannah Etli

Cort Johnson

With staff attending to many cases and activities, we have been very busy this past year. Our Reparative Board Program now has 5 boards made up of 20 citizen volunteers who have been trained in the principles of restorative justice. In monthly meetings, these boards work collaboratively with adult offenders who have been referred by the court, Washington County State's Attorney, or local law enforcement agencies. Their aim is to design a reparative agreement that addresses victim and community needs.

Reparative Board volunteers serve as representatives of the community, and facilitate a conversation with each offender that includes input from direct and indirect victims of the crime. Offenders are held accountable for their actions and learn about the impact of their actions on other individuals and the community. The Board then creates a contract with the offender that specifies how he or she will deepen their understanding of the harm they

caused, to make amends, to keep from reoffending, and to restore a positive connection with the community. Victims and other affected parties can choose to have a voice in the process by participating in person or on the phone, by speaking to a victim liaison, or filling out a questionnaire that is read to the group.

Our volunteers do wonderful work, as evidenced by our interview with Joyce DeForge (see page 2). Joyce is our longest-standing Reparative Board volunteer. It is through dedicated and committed volunteers like Joyce that our programs are so successful.

The wisdom of these volunteers is invaluable in helping people understand the effects of their actions and how they can make amends. This willingness to collaborate with their fellow volunteers, victims, and responsible parties gives the principles of restorative justice a great foothold in our community. Our gratitude goes out to all of them.

Welcome aboard Kate!

The Greater Barre Community Justice Center welcomes Kate Aylward in the position of Reentry Specialist for the Restorative Reentry Program. A Barre resident, Kate comes to the Justice Center with a master's degree in criminal administration, and worked for 12 years at Dartmouth Journal Services as a Senior Production Specialist. She also has three years of volunteer experience in multiple capacities at the Justice Center: Reparative Board member, Circle of Support and Accountability (COSA) member, and Chair of the Board of Directors.



Kate Aylward

to aid them in a successful transition. She will assist with navigation of services and work with each client and his COSA team, which provides guidance and positive modeling for life in the community.

As Reentry Specialist, Kate will be working with clients who are reentering the community from incarceration

The Greater Barre Community Justice Center addresses the issues of conflict and crime by promoting shared responsibility for a safe and healthy community.

The Center engages citizens in restoring relationships, repairing past harms and building community connections through education and involvement.



**Volunteer Profile:
Joyce Deforge**

Joyce started volunteering on a GBCJC Reparative Board in March of 2006, after having experienced the victim’s seat at a GBCJC Reparative Board meeting. She felt the process helped the offender and her to re-establish the friendship that they had once had. She was intrigued, and knew that this was something that matched her philosophy of teaching and working with young people.

A Teacher Advisor at U32 Junior/Senior High School for 33 years, Joyce helped many young people in trouble to accomplish their goals. Her work with special needs students gave her a keen ability to recognize difficulties and to break a challenging task down into smaller components.

Joyce has also spent time in prison — not as an inmate, but as a volunteer teacher of African American literature, working with inmates at St. Charles prison in Boston. She was an adjunct professor in English for the furlough program at the Barre Courthouse prior to the start of Community High School of VT, when she served on the

committee to help establish that institution in 1997. All these life experiences and wisdom transfer directly to her work on the Reparative Board.

When asked what she likes about serving on a Reparative Board, Joyce cites the pleasure she takes in giving back to the community to honor the many good years she has had in Central Vermont. She also likes to help folks who have made mistakes to find ways to repair the harm, put it behind them and move on. She says that Reparative Boards make great social groups that keep her thinking and laughing.

Joyce thinks that citizen input makes a big difference because, even when

the victim can’t be at the meeting, Board members can think about how the incident might affect themselves if they were victimized, and they can explain the impact of the crime on the greater community to clients who often don’t realize its impact. She says that Board members are just ordinary folks like the client and victim, and, as such, are less threatening than the judicial system.

In terms of delivering a collaborative restorative response, Joyce thinks that if you know there is a better way and you’ve watched clients experience a positive outcome, then that’s the way it should be done.

The Voice of the Community

Restorative Justice in Action

Sometimes a petty crime that gets a person referred to Reparative Probation is just the tip of the iceberg. This turned out to be the case when one of our Reparative Board panels met with a young man in his early 20s, whose crime was presenting about \$80 worth of false tokens at a local business to earn quick cash after a night out drinking with buddies. Reparative Probation was just one of the conditions ordered by the court; other conditions included paying restitution and reporting to his probation officer for one year.

Each Reparative Board meeting begins with the citizen volunteers asking the offender to talk about who he/she is as a person. This helps separate the doer from the deed, and fleshes out a bigger story than the bare facts that appear in the police affidavit. The volunteers come prepared to respond to victim and community needs, while offering support to offenders as they come to understand, accept, and carry out their obligations to repair the harm.

In this case, the victim — the store clerk — chose not to attend, but

Board members conveyed the victim's perspective, and spoke of their frustration with petty crimes affecting the way citizens feel about their community.

provided valuable input by talking to our volunteer victim liaison. Board members successfully conveyed the victim’s perspective — how the clerk now felt less trusting of customers, and how the customers in turn felt less trusted due to the store’s stepped-up scrutiny of all of them. They also spoke of their frustration with petty crimes costing valuable court and police time and affecting the way citizens feel about their community.

Board members learned that the offender had been involved in two other incidents around the same time — an encounter with drug dealers that turned violent, and a life-altering automobile accident. In the more dramatic events, he spoke of receiving tremendous support from his community and a personal wake-up call to straighten out his life. As part of his 90-day contract with the board, he wrote a reflective piece about the ripple effects of his “thoughtless and selfish actions”. To repair harm and reconnect with the community, he wrote apology letters to those directly affected by the false pretenses incident, performed 25 hours of volunteer work for non-profit organizations, wrote a letter of appreciation for his parents’ support through all of the incidents, and outlined the steps he could take to begin building the life he envisions for himself.

“I lost too much over the summer and it made me realize how important it is to be part of a community,” he wrote. “With a little thought and careful consideration I have concluded that I will not harm my community or other communities willingly or accidentally to the best of my ability as long as I live.”

Thank you Diane!

The GBCJC staff and volunteers want to thank Diane McKain, who started working at the GBCJC as Reentry Volunteer Coordinator five years ago, and then moved in to the Reentry Coordinator position. Diane came to us after retiring from years of experience as a school teacher and administrator in the Connecticut school system. She wanted to do some work where she could make a difference while doing something different. From working with our clients, to navigating services, finding housing and employment and working with volunteers, her commitment and compassion came through every step of the way. Her experience made the program what it is today as she hands it off to our new reentry specialist, Kate Aylward. Diane is stepping out of this position, but — luckily for the GBCJC — will be working part time for us coordinating conferences with our Family Group Conferencing for Youth Adjudicated Delinquent grant. We thank Diane for all she has done for the Justice Center.

