Welcome! Introducing RJCO Quarterly

I cannot fully express what a privilege it is to introduce the RJCO Quarterly and officially announce the reemergence of the Coalition of Victim-Offender Mediation Programs (COVOMP), now named the Restorative Justice Coalition of Oregon (RJCO). COVOMP was instrumental in the establishment of the Department of Correction’s Facilitated Dialogue Program, the NW Justice Forum, and the advancement of Victim-Offender Dialogue Programs across the state. Building on our proud history of activism and program development, and also recognizing the need for an extended identity and purpose, RJCO Leadership Committee members have spent the past two years establishing RJCO as a growing and legitimate force for positive change in Oregon. Our mission is to “promote and support the implementation and practice of restorative justice principles and models in Oregon’s justice, law enforcement, educational and other community institutions.” Thanks to the dedication and imaginative work of restorative justice practitioners across the state, we find ourselves in an environment ripe for the values and principles of restorative justice to emerge as a compass for how we respond to harm in Oregon. As we expand our membership base, it is our unwavering commitment to support restorative justice practitioners, and their work to increase the health and vitality of our communities. We are excited to launch this quarterly newsletter as a vehicle to share exciting news, resources, and stories as we collectively advance this important work in our communities and throughout our state.

Sincerely,
Matthew Hartman
President, RJCO

“Restorative Justice is respect. Respect for all, even those who are different from us; even those who seem to be our enemies.”
-Howard Zehr
Resolutions Northwest brings Restorative Justice to Rigler Elementary

Excerpts provided by Tobin Krell

Excerpt from a parent letter to Portland City Commissioners:
Resolutions Northwest’s Restorative Justice program has been a part of our neighborhood school, Rigler Elementary, for two years now. Designed in part to address the disproportionate number of expulsions and suspensions of kids of color, Rigler has seen a significant change in school culture already. Students whose behavior might have resulted in them being expelled from school, and alienated from the community, are now invited to make recompense for their actions in the form of community service, and to be accountable to the school and the larger community. This allows them to continue to build valuable relationships and gives them the potential to be successful within a supportive community.

“The lot of times adults make people apologize to each other and they don’t mean it. When we do the mediation with you and people apologize, they mean it. They know what they did was wrong.”

Rigler Student

The program has been a learning process for staff, students, administration and the broader community. One teacher notes, “I try to use it everyday as I have conversations with students about their actions. We have some students that have been historically rejected by the school system, and this gave them the chance to be listened to, not judged. I learned about our families, and that they care more than we give them credit for.”

Circle discussions give students a voice

I use it with my students and I work on holding them accountable for what they did and then also making them understand what they could have done differently, what they can do now to make up for the pain that they caused. I have learned that students need that space to process what happened and that both sides need an opportunity to express themselves. I also learned that it is a skill that will benefit them always. I learned that students want to solve their problems in a restorative manner because they feel better at the end.

School – Based Restorative Justice

Resolutions Northwest—in collaboration with districts, schools, the Department for Juvenile Justice and others—provides training, consultation and restorative services to administrators, teachers, staff, students and families in schools throughout Multnomah County and beyond.

The overall goal is to find alternatives to suspension, expulsion and juvenile justice involvement, while holding youth and ourselves accountable for behavior that creates harm in the community.

Click here to learn more.
Jackson County Youth Gets Second Chance

Restorative Justice programs give victims and offenders the opportunity to repair harm, restore relationships, and rebuild community.

By Cara Walsh

Sixteen year old Jason* was charged with Theft I for breaking into a convenience store in his local community. Due to the damage of the store and the merchandise that was stolen, Jason was responsible for paying over $1000 in restitution to repair the harm. The victim received support through the Victim Assistance, Youth Accountability (VAYA) program in Jackson County, where he expressed interest in participating in a dialogue with Jason. Concurrently, Jason participated in a series of five classes where he was supported to take responsibility, explore the impact of his actions on others, and develop a plan to make things right. During the face-to-face dialogue, Jason took responsibility for his actions and the victim was able to ask questions and share how this incident impacted him professionally as well as personally. As the conversation progressed, Jason and the owner of the store were able to see the humanity in each other and the initial tension was released into mutual understanding and care. The victim was asked what he would need to make this right for him. In response he asked Jason questions about his education, life, and future. The youth shared that he was completing his junior year of high school and was getting C’s and D’s.

The victim looked at the youth and said, “Let me make a deal with you. For every A you get on your report card, I will take $100.00 off what you owe me in restitution.”

And if you graduate from high school, I will not only eliminate any remaining debt, but I will be standing at your graduation ceremony with flowers in my hand.” The victim then continued to say, “but, if you have any unexcused absences from school or get in any more trouble with the law, then this deal is off and you will be responsible for paying the entire restitution.” Jason smiled. He understood that he was going to be accountable for his actions regardless of what he chose to do. He also understood that this community member cared about him and his future and was giving him the opportunity to improve his life and make a difference.

Authors note: As of the last check-in, the youth was on track with his commitment.

*Name and some details have been changed for confidentiality

To learn more about Jackson County’s Mediation Works, [click here](https://www.jacksoncountymediationworks.org).
Collaborative Program Evaluation as a Restorative Practice
Rachel H. Cunliffe, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Conflict Resolution Graduate Program, PSU.

Frequently, evaluation is seen as a bit of a bugbear for not-for-profit and government agencies. Restorative justice programs are no exception and our lack of evaluation is notorious. Institutionally-based restorative justice programs are often required to monitor certain indicators of interest to their host institutions, which are generally accountable for social control or public safety. So the focus of these measures is “offender” outcomes: recidivism, follow-through with reparations, restitution, etc. If any efforts are made to capture victim outcomes they are in the form of “satisfaction” surveys with little attention given to more intangible outcomes such as “healing”, a “sense of justice”, “vindication”, “acknowledgement”, or any of the other outcomes that victimologists tell us are among victim needs. Finally, we are frequently forced to evaluate outcomes that are of a lesser interest to us. Consequently, evaluation findings, to which we have to give a lot of time, are of only marginal interest and our motivation to take up recommendations is low.

One of our challenges in evaluating what we value in restorative justice is that our data tends to be qualitative and narrative, comprising anecdotes and stories by participants. While compelling reading, these are time-consuming to gather, and rarely are counted as “evidence” in a culture where the “gold standard” of evaluation is the randomized-control trial.

Another challenge is how to operationalize our valued outcomes such that they can be counted or otherwise measured to provide aggregate data, which seems so popular to our funders.

Collaborative program evaluation seeks to include program stakeholders in formulating evaluation questions and foci, designing the evaluation plan, implementing data collection, and analyzing findings. Collaborative program evaluation may be found in the same family as “utilization” evaluation, empowerment evaluation, and participatory evaluation. It has been found that uptake of recommendations of such evaluations is much higher, increasing the effectiveness and utility of the evaluation and raising the return on the investment of time and resources of the organization in evaluation activities.

Collaborative program evaluation allows stakeholders to come together to examine goals, visions, and theories of change and construct logic models (log frames) to take note of program activities, inputs, and outputs. Such conversations often build understanding and promote surfacing of the root causes of strain and conflict within organizations as new people join and innovate in ways that seem to threaten older traditions and values. Thus, the evaluation process provides for the support of internal justice and the strengthening of the inner coherence of the organization’s community.

In 2013, several organizations partnered in a learning community about collaborative evaluation with a graduate program at Portland State University. Each organization participated in its own collaborative evaluation. Clustering the evaluations in this way allowed the evaluation team to differentiate between organizational issues supporting or impeding effectiveness, and systemic barriers to realizing restorative values. This outcome of evaluation has implications beyond individual organizational accountability with the potential to influence law and policymaking, thus shaping the context in which RJ is practiced.
Oregon
Oregon Legislature Passes Bill to Roll Back “Zero Tolerance” Policies

When the focus turns to healing the community, victim and offender, everything changes (VIDEO)

Nation
How Restorative Justice Changed This Colorado Cop’s Views on Prison

A Radical New Approach to Prison Design

World
Rounding up 2013 for Restorative Justice: What Lies Ahead

Restorative Justice around the World

RJCO Quarterly
To join newsletter mailing list:
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The RJCO Leadership Committee thanks Carley Berkey for developing, coordinating, and compiling the RJCO Quarterly.