What's New?

“NACRJ Virtual Circle”: An On-Line Discussion Forum for Members

“Virtual Circle” is an on-line discussion forum specifically for members. It is the brain child of Joe Brummer, an NACRJ member, who contacted us following the 5th National Conference about creating an on-line discussion forum. He expressed the need for the discussion board in this way:

While attending the 2015 NACRJ Conference in Ft. Lauderdale this year and I meet and became friends with so many wonderful people whose needs, passions, and knowledge surpassed my own. At the close of the conference, I didn’t want to say goodbye. It had become clear that our field needed ways to provide additional supports to practitioners and researchers that would help them develop their knowledge and skills as well as help them achieve their goals and objectives. I wanted a way for members to continue learning, sharing, and be supportive of one another. Out of this recognition came the idea for the NACRJ Virtual Circle.

He defined the mission of NACRJ Virtual Circle as:

...keeping that sense of connection created during the conference alive among NACRJ members between conferences. The discussion board is open to current NACRJ members as a benefit of membership. It is a place to ask questions, share stories, and build community. Our members have so much collective knowledge that needs to be shared. The “Virtual Circle” give us the means to benefit from one another in ways we couldn’t before.

Over two months Joe worked with Frank Nilsen, our website technical consultant, to create the discussion board function with the NACRJ website www.nacrj.org. Once members login to the NACRJ website they can access the discussion board through the “Resources” tab and selecting “Forum”.

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Additional topics can be added as needed. However, several pre-set discussion topics have been created. These include:

* **General NACRJ Membership**
  - Introductions
  - Community and Restorative Justice in the News
  - Training and Books
  - Suggestion Box – Request for Topics

* **Community Justice**
  - Building Sustainable Communities
  - Healing Historical Harms
  - Practices

* **Restorative Justice**
  - Restorative Practices/Justice in Schools
  - Restorative Justice and the Criminal Justice System
  - Spirituality and Restorative Justice
  - Practices

* **Research and Evaluation in Community and Restorative Justice**
  - Program Evaluations
  - Quasi-experimental Research Designs
  - Experimental Research Designs
  - Qualitative Research Designs

We hope you become an active user of the *NACRJ Virtual Circle* and are able to learn from and network with other members.

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**Kris Miner – To Serve as Associate Editor of the NACRJ Website**

The Executive Director’s role has become increasingly time consuming and demanding as NACRJ develops into a fully functional professional association. Managing the website is no longer a one person job. Thankfully Kris Miner has agreed to serve as Associate Editor for [www.nacrj.org](http://www.nacrj.org). She will begin work on the website in the next couple of weeks.

Kris is Director of [Circle Space Services](http://www.circlespace.com) which is a nonprofit organization providing training and services for schools, veterans and victims of severe crime. In addition, she serves as the Victim Offender Dialogue Coordinator for the Minnesota Department of Corrections.

*Please Welcome Kris Miner in her new role with the NACRJ.*

The fact that NACRJ now needs additional people to manage the website and other functions is a very positive indicator for the future of our Association.

On October 9, 2015 the NACRJ Board of Directors approved our second official policy statement. The policy statement advocates for Victim Offender Mediated Dialogue (VOMD) in State Government Correctional Facilities in the U. S.

It reads as follows (including the footnote for Section 1):

1. The NACRJ Board of Directors seeks to promote policies or practices that allow mediated or facilitated contact between victims and offenders. While we recognize that there are states with a no victim offender contact policy, we strongly encourage those states to reconsider their positions and join the more than twenty states that already have formal protocol to make VOMD available to those victims and survivors who request it. We are calling for all states to adopt VOMD programming, which promotes healing of victims and works toward earning redemption for offenders while increasing accountability for their actions.¹

2. NACRJ seeks to assist states:
   a. In developing the policy and capacity to support victims of crime who seek a VOMD process in states where VOMD programming in correctional facilities is not currently offered.
   b. To develop evidence-based policy and practices to implement VOD practices where they do not currently exist.
   c. To make technical supports available to corrections staff in states seeking to initiate VOMD programming.

3. NACRJ seeks to create awareness of the potential of VOMD to augment correctional practices in ways that are meaningful to victims and offenders and promote increased safety within correctional institutions.

¹ NACRJ recognizes that within those systems with a no-contact policy, correctional administrators may have discretionary authority to waive the prohibition in particular cases. While a discretionary waiver is a good step, it is at the discretion of the correctional administrator and is not supported by policy. Allowing VOMD programming within prisons by policy systematizes the option and when used provides an added level of personal accountability for offenders to their victims or their families which is otherwise not available to them.
The policy was approved with the understanding that it would be accompanied with an addendum that would focus on practice guidelines and implementation issues. The addendum will recognize the important leadership role of the National Association of Victim Service Professionals in Corrections (NAVSPIC) on this issue. NAVSPIC established the first set of guidelines consistent with restorative practices for "Victim Centered Victim Offender Dialogue in Crimes of Severe Violence". These guidelines are fully consistent with the theory, principles and values of restorative justice practice.

Consistent with the advocacy aspect of its mission, NACRJ will express its collective voice on other public policy and practice issues as they relate to the application of relational justice practices (i.e., community justice and restorative justice).

What's on the Horizon?

Collaborative Relationships with Other Organizations

NACRJ has initiated discussions with The Peace Alliance (TPA) to create a Memorandum of Understanding between them to facilitate joint efforts and projects. The intent is to encourage but not require close coordination and collaborative efforts to advance the field.

On October 6, 2015 members of the NACRJ Board of Directors and the Executive Committee held a joint teleconference with the President of The Peace Alliance to discuss the proposed Memorandum of Understanding. After that discussion there was a general consensus in support of the agreement. The proposed agreement will now be considered by the leadership within both organizations. If approved NACRJ and TPA the agreement would be signed by both organizations and guide our collaborative efforts to promote a more just, equitable and peaceful society.

This Memorandum of Understanding may become a model for similar agreements between NACRJ and other organizations with a closely related mission.

Virginia Alliance of Community and Restorative Justice begins Chapter Formation Process

Five NACRJ members from Virginia have initiated the process to form a statewide NACRJ Chapter in Virginia (Donna Chewning, Sylvia Clute, Kristin Reed, Shelli Jost Brady and Pamela McCarthy). On Sept. 23, 2015 they filed the formal letter of intent to form a chapter. Initially the Virginia Alliance of Community and Restorative Justice is listed as an Affiliate Organization of NACRJ. Over the next year they will work through the requirements for chapter formation.

Affiliate organizations retain their independence. However, Chapters are not independent organizations since they are an official arm of the NACRJ. Chapters report to the NACRJ and
must operate in a manner consistent with NACRJ policies. Chapter members must also be
NACRJ members.

If you are interested in forming a local, regional or state NACRJ chapter contact the
Executive Director at exec.director@nacrj.org (or 201-218-7159) to discuss the process and
obtain the current guidelines for chapter formation.

The 5th National Conference

As many of you know we had a wonderful conference in Ft. Lauderdale in June thanks to all
the hard work by Mara Schiff, Lead Conference Organizer and her colleagues on the
National and Local Organizing Committees. Over 550 people attended the conference. The
came from across the US and six other nations. About half of the participants were
educators.

Audio Recordings of Keynote/Plenary Sessions are Available on WWW.NACRJ.ORG

During the conference Molly Rowan Leach recorded the keynote and plenary sessions.
These recordings are now posted on the website. The speech by Dr. Cornel West is
posted on the Home Page. There is also a link below his speech to all the other
speeches (Conferences -→ Keynote Speakers). His speech is posted with all the other
speeches on the Keynote Speakers page.

Unfortunately, there was a technical glitch in recording the keynote speech by Margaret
Burnham and we are not able to post her speech.

NACRJ Awards Recipients for 2015
(See also the “Awards” tab on the website and “Awards Banquet Photo Album” under
“Images from the Conference” under the “Conferences” tab.)

At the Awards Banquet, NACRJ recognized outstanding contributions to the field with
five awards. They are:

- **John Byrd Award for Restorative and Community Justice** - Recognizes individuals,
  organizations or groups for their record of sustained and important contributions to
  restorative and/or community justice education, research and/or practice aimed at
  producing safer and more just communities.

  **Recipient:** Nancy Reistenberg, Restorative Practices Specialist for the Minnesota
  Department of Education.
• **Bert Thompson Award for Faith Based Community and Restorative Justice** – Recognizes individuals for faith based servant leadership and volunteerism to address harms, injustices and communities problems through restorative and/or community and restorative justice values, principles and practices.

  **Recipient:** Prof. Scott Wood, JD, Professor of Law, Founder of the Loyola Law School Center for Restorative Justice

• **Dennis Maloney Award for Youth-Based Community and Restorative Justice** – Recognizes individuals, groups, programs or programs for a record of important and sustained contributions to youth-based community and restorative justice programs.

  **Recipient:** Community Justice for Youth Institute (Cheryl Graves, Ora Schub and Robert Spicer)

• **Leadership Award** - Recognizes individuals, groups or organizations that have demonstrated extraordinary leadership in the fields of restorative and community justice.

  **Recipient:** Janice Jerome, Executive Director, Restorative Justice Institute of Atlanta, LLC.

• **Lifetime Achievement Award** – Honors a person for achievements across the lifetime career in restorative and/or community justice. Nominees should have made vital contributions of outstanding significance to restorative and/or community justice education, research and/or practice.

  **Recipient:** Kay Pranis, Restorative Justice Theorist, Practitioner and Author

To read more about the 2015 recipients and a list of past recipients go to [www.nacrj.org](http://www.nacrj.org) and click on the “Awards” tab and select each Award for more information.

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**The 6th National Conference on Community and Restorative Justice (2017)**

The planning process for the 2017 National Conference has started. Fania Davis, Executive Director of Restorative Justice for Oakland Youth (RJOY) and Professor Teiahsha Bankhead, California State University serve as the Lead Organizer and Co-Lead Organizer respectively. The 2017 conference is likely to focus heavily on community and restorative justice practices as they relate to youth and education.

The 2015 post conference survey responses from attendees are already helping to guide the planning process. As we get deeper into the planning these data will continue to provide
contextual guidance to the 2017 planning team. *If you were one of those who responded to post-conference survey – THANKS!!*

The proposed dates for the conference are now the second or third week of June 2017 starting in mid-week – with a pre-conference training session on Wednesday and the conference on Thursday, Friday and Saturday; and, a full day on the last day. We are still working to lock in a venue.

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**Call for Site Proposals for the 2019 Conference**

In September we sent out a call for Site Proposals for the 2019 National Conference on Community and Restorative Justice. To date we have received one proposal and another is pending.

While the deadline for proposal is October 16, 2015 we would accept proposals that receive by email on the following Monday (Oct. 19, 2015). Attached with the mail is a form for submitting a proposal for the site of the 2019 conference.

**2015 Survey of Coalitions and Collaborations**

In the fall of 2014 and spring of 2015 Ted Lewis worked with the NACRJ leadership team to develop and conduct the first NACRJ survey of Coalitions (organized efforts involving entities that cross two or more jurisdictions) and Collaborations (organized efforts involving entities within a single jurisdiction) that employ relational justice approaches (i.e., restorative and community justice) aimed *addressing harms to people, improve quality of life, and promoting peace* within communities. This survey was a *Listening Project* designed to learn as much as we could about the range of services available and the needs of the field.

Over time, NACRJ seeks to increase its capacity to provide supportive services to broaden the application of restorative and community justice strategies – in neighborhoods, communities, schools, justice systems and the broader society. The first step is to find out what is being done, who is doing it, where it is being done and what the most pressing needs are.

The first two thirds of the survey was designed to gather basic data about the coalitions and the last third was a needs assessment. Information from the first segment, with permission from respective coalitions, can be listed on the NACRJ website as a way to help them be identified and located. The information from the latter segment will in the near future involve some follow up communication with the coalition leaders to discuss how NACRJ may be able to help coalitions and collaborations achieve their mission.
In our first effort, 17 collaborations and coalitions responded to the survey. We hope that with replication we will gradually gain a much more representative sample that will provide more reliable data which can help guide NACRJ efforts to support the field in meaningful ways.

The following data summarize a few key observations from our first survey of coalitions and collaborations (responses are not mutually exclusive as respondents were asked to select all that apply):

1. Primary *restorative justice focus areas* (not mutually exclusive because respondents could select more than one response): (N = 17)
   a. Juvenile Criminal Cases (92.71%, n= 12)
   b. Post-Incarceration/Reentry (84.62%, n= 11)
   c. Courts (76.92%, n= 10)
   d. Schools (76.92%, n= 10)
   e. Victim Services & Supports (61.54%, n= 8)
   f. Adult Criminal Cases (61.54%, n= 8)
   g. Police Interventions (61.54% - n= 8)
   h. Neighborhoods (53.85%, n= 7)
   i. Other areas less than 50%

2. Primary *services provided* (N = 11):
   a. Education and Training (100%, n=11)
   b. Developing and Supporting Programs (90.91%, n= 10)
   c. Integrating with the Justice System (90.91%, n= 10)
   d. Networking and Sharing Information (63.64%, n= 7)
   e. Setting Standards and Policies (45.45%, n= 5)
   f. Coordinating Area Conferences (27.27%, n= 3)

3. *What does your group need the most help in?* (N = 11)
   a. Up to Date Research Findings (100%, n= 11)
   b. Up to Date Listings of Programs (72.73%, n= 8)
   c. Funding and Fiscal Management Supports (63.64%, n= 7)
   d. Resources for Conducting Training (54.55%, n= 6)
   e. Information About National Conferences (54.55%, n=6)
   f. Models for Engaging State Policy Makers (45.45%, n= 5)
   g. Partnerships for Engaging Other Coalitions (45.45%, n= 5)
   h. Standards for Best Practices
      i. Restorative Justice (36.36%, n= 4)
      ii. Community Justice (36.36%, n= 4)
      iii. Restorative Discipline for Schools (36.36%, n= 4)
j. Board Development Supports (36.36%, n= 4)
k. Media / Communication Development Support (36.36%, n= 4)
l. Other Needs (30% or less)

4. The qualitative comments concerning the most important needs experienced by these groups were consistent with that suggested by the distribution of responses above. Three responses are representative of those received:

a. - Help gathering and presenting pertinent data on the impact of R.J. (in particular the cost-savings and improved communities and individuals that can come from the decrease in recidivism). Creating opportunities to talk with leaders at the national and state levels about how to integrate R.J. into the criminal justice system. Working with national and state leaders to create streams of funding for R.J. or to divert funding to R.J.

b. - Advocacy at national level for supports for prisoner reentry initiatives as a "restorative" measure after incarceration. Support for alternatives to incarceration for adults in the criminal justice system - much of the RJ focus has seemed to be on youth, but seems there hasn't been nearly as much support for RJ alternatives for adults who have committed criminal offenses; Resources that integrate a trauma-informed approach with RJ.

c. - Funding to support our mission & goals – Integrity; Fidelity & Consistency measurements; Standards and guidelines for RJ Practitioners; Communication & networking across the entire state; Program evaluation; Demonstrating efficacy of restorative practices in schools.

Over the next few months, the Executive Committee and Board of Directors will use these data to initiate conversations with the responding coalitions and collaborations and help us decide how best to use NACRJ resources to support the field and advance the movement.

**Membership News**

**Fall 2015 Membership Drive**

Each year we conduct an annual membership drive in the fall. This year the drive will run from now to the end of November 2015. During the membership drive new (first time) memberships are discounted by 50% on all membership categories.

We ask your assistance by sending the **attached membership discount flyer** along with this issue of *NACRJ News* to people you think may be interested in the NACRJ and would consider joining our Association.
50% of Members Listed on the NACRJ Membership Directory

We continue to struggle with getting our members to provide the information we need to list them on the NACRJ membership directory. At present, about half of our members are listed in the membership directory. We want to list everyone.

You can check to see if you are listed. Go to the membership directory at www.nacrj.org located under the “Member Directory” tab. If you are not listed and would like to be listed, complete and return the Membership Directory Information and Consent Form (attached with this issue – us .doc, .docx or .rtf but not .pdf).

By policy NACRJ does not list anyone in the directory without a completed form. The form gives us the information we need and permission to publish that information in the directory. So, if you are not listed please complete the form that came with your email and send it to exec.director@nacrj.org.

Together we are building an association that advances the field and speaks to important policy issues to fulfill our motto “Shaping Justice for the 21st Century”.

Michael J. Gilbert, Ph. D., Executive Director
Oct. 14, 2015