

THE RESTORATIVE REVIEW



The monthly newsletter of the Hartford Community Restorative Justice Center



Cards with illustrations from Jonney R. and Randy O.

WHAT'S NEW

UPCOMING EVENTS

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MERCH

.....

YEAR-ENDS STATS

.....

CONFERENCE
REFLECTIONS

Quote of the Month

"I learned about restorative justice - a justice that seeks not to punish, but to heal. A justice, according to Kay Pranis, that is not about getting even, but about getting well. A justice that seeks to transform broken lives, relationships, and communities, rather than shatter them further."

- Fanie E. Davis -

The Little Book of Race and Restorative Justice

Upcoming Events

Community Coffee

Fridays at 10am
Hartford Justice Center

Coffee will continue on Friday mornings in July! Stop by - chat with us, share a cup of coffee, and meet some of the folks living in our housing.

Hartford's Annual Independence Day Celebration

July 4th
Kilowatt Field, Wilder VT

Food trucks, live music, fireworks, and lawn games! What could be better? This annual celebration is hosted by Hartford Parks and Rec and is hard to miss.

Merch

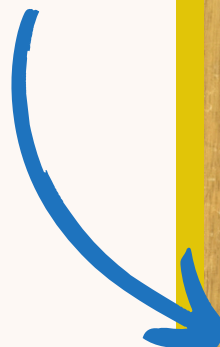
We have a new batch of stickers at the office, as well as t-shirt designs. If you want to rep the Justice Center, swing by and pick some up! The t-shirts were a limited run, so hurry if you want one.



Our newest staff member, Thomas, showing off the "Grow Stronger Communities" t-shirt.



New Stickers!



Year End Stats

As the state fiscal year ends, we collect statistics on the past year. FY24 closed this Sunday, which gives us the opportunity to reflect on our programs and how we grow and change.

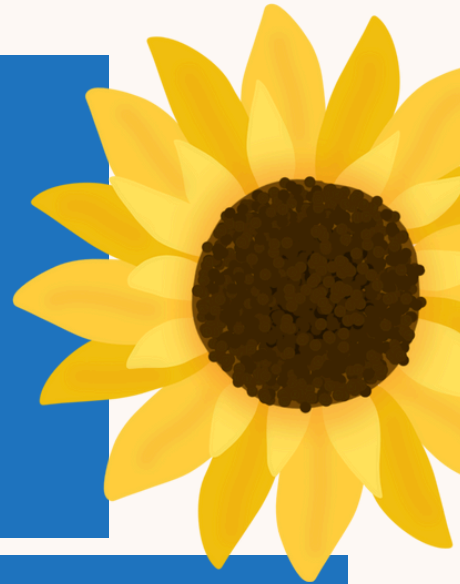
Rep Panels

429.5 volunteer hours

135.5 hours more than FY23

50 panel participants served

1 more than FY23



Reentry

371 volunteer hours

222 hours less than FY23

41 individuals served

8 less than FY23

This shift in hours has a few causes: we've had less people coming out of prison and going into the apartments. Of those individuals we have had more going straight to full-time work and fewer people participating in the CoSA program.

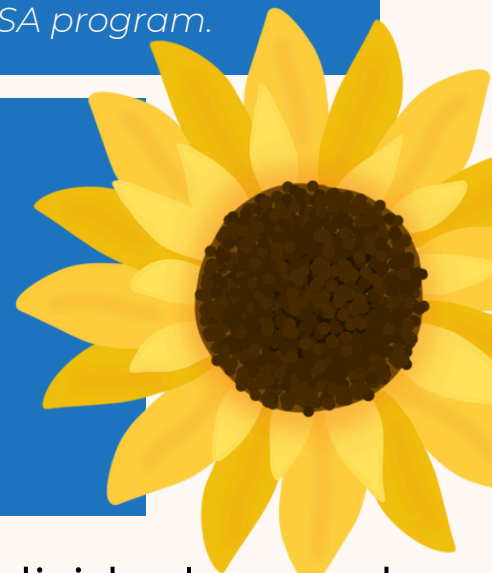


Circles of Peace

964 volunteer hours

245 hours more than FY23

18 individuals served



1,764.5 total volunteer hours and **109** individuals served

Conference Reflections

A wonderful crew of RJ practitioners gathered on June 7th for the Vermont Restorative Justice Conference. We asked two of our valued community members, Cindy Shannon and Bill Brawley, to report back on the conference and their experience for those of use who were unable to attend.

- Cindy Shannon -

I was so glad I attended the Vermont Annual Restorative Conference; it was fabulous. First of all, there were so many people, both professionals and volunteers! This made it clear that many Vermonters care about those whose lives have been difficult and ended up committing crimes. Many of us believe that Restorative Justice is a powerful way to help those who want to make a better life for themselves and for their family.

Charity Clark, our VT Attorney General, spoke powerfully about how important it is for Restorative Justice to continue in VT. Kiah Morris, a former member of the Vermont House of Representatives, was our keynote speaker. Wow! Her story was inspiring. Her energy made many of us want to do more.

The workshops helped us to learn more about clients' struggles to build a better, happier life for themselves and their family. I attended the Poverty Workshop; It's not easy to be poor. The car may break down, a child might get very sick, lots of money get used up. And still, many clients keep trying to make life better. It's important for us to celebrate their achievements, no matter how small.

I am glad to be part of RJC. I learn a great deal from our clients. I see how many challenges lie ahead for a client: jobs, new relationships with family members, worries about housing, etc. Yet, when I am with clients, I also see courage, smiles, trust in us who try to help them, and hopes for the future. Every time I hear their stories, my mind and heart respond in awe. I believe that our clients help me become better too. The Restorative Justice program is a wonderful gift for all of us.

Gaining Context in a Fractured World

Bill Brawley

It's all too easy, given the work we do on panels, COSAs, and circles, to focus on the work at hand, of promoting restorative justice principles beyond the one client at a time mode that we frequently operate in.

Which is why I found attendance at the Vermont Restorative Justice Community and Volunteer Conference so uplifting. It was a reminder of the basic values that many of us originally volunteered for, and a reminder that the social movement that is restorative justice is gaining traction in the broader community. We are not alone! Far from it.

Personally, I had known that there were other community justice centers in Vermont, but I had not realized that there were 22 organizations similar to ours, including conflict resolution centers in local high schools and a Center for Equity and Justice at St. Michael's College.

The conference, held at the Lake Morey Inn and Resort on a Friday in early June, was graced by beautiful weather. Many of the more than 200 people who attended were able to gather on the lawns or docks fronting on Lake Morey to discuss topics related to the conference's theme, "Offering Dignity and Uplifting Equity."

A team composed of representatives from CJsCs/RJCs from around the state has been working with three contractors to fulfill a 2021 pledge made by those 22 groups to "hold ourselves accountable and move toward a justice system that brings dignity, safety and repair of harm for all." Jessie Schmidt, director of the Orange County RJC, successfully applied for a federal grant that is supporting implementation of three broad categories of programming:

- The development, delivery and institutionalization of professional development trainings;
- Assessments of data collection and evaluation methods and the design of equitable data and evaluation systems;
- Equity assessments of statewide policies and practices that contribute to inclusive and equitable restorative programs.

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This work and the committee leading the effort, are known known by an acronym, EDJIE, which is short for (deep breath!) Vermont's Restorative Justice Statewide Equity through Data, Justice, Inclusion, and Education Initiative. Set to conclude in September, the goal is to provide Vermont's RJ community with more tools "to address personal and institutional racism, implicit bias, trauma, gender equity, and general inclusivity."

These themes of diversity, equity, and inclusion carried over to all aspects of the conference workshops. Sorry to say I didn't take notes during the opening remarks, by Vermont Attorney General Charity Clark, who spoke a day after Gov. Phil Scott vetoed a bill expanding the range of cases that can be referred to community justice centers around the state. (That veto was overridden last week.)

Nor did I document the keynote by Kiah Morris, a former two-term state representative in Bennington County and the second African American woman to be elected to the Legislature in Vermont history. Drawing on her lived experience of racism in Vermont, Morris challenged the conference to be more aware of the systemic biases that may present themselves in the course of our work, and to do a better job of anticipating and rooting out those inequities.

But I did do a better job of jotting down some new vocabulary ("responsible party," "harmed party"), and a rundown of models for restorative practitioners taking on domestic and sexual violence cases. This is important because enabling legislation passed last year (known as Act 11) will allow people harmed by sexual and domestic abuse the option of choosing to seek justice through a RJC. The rules are still being worked out, but the Hartford Community Restorative Justice Center is ahead of the curve. We are the first RJC to receive (in 2019) a certification from the Vermont Domestic Violence Council allowing us to start a Circles of Peace program focused on the responsible party.

The most valuable aspect of the conference, for this reporter, was in meeting like-minded people from around the state who are equally committed to a vision of a more humane, community-based alternative to the current justice system.