



Bringing People Together

# talking piece

summer 2011

## PiRI Says Farewell to Sue at Open House

On May 3, PiRI welcomed nearly 50 people for its annual Open House, an opportunity to celebrate the year's successes and spread the news about PiRI's work. This year's event held an extra layer of meaning as the organization bid farewell to longtime board member and past president Sue Klassen.

Sue, who volunteered with PiRI for more than a decade, recently departed for a cross-country bike trip with her husband, Victor. Following the trip, they will reside temporarily in Harrisonburg, Virginia while Sue works toward a graduate degree at The Center for Justice and Peacebuilding at Eastern Mennonite University. Ultimately, they plan to settle in Ontario, Canada.



Sue Klassen, Past President

The Open House featured a gourmet dinner by board member Jeanne Carlivati, music from Courts Coordinator Isobel Davies, and remarks honoring Sue by several people who have been with PiRI for years, including founder Will Bontrager and advisory board member Ed Minardo.

PiRI President Mary Reed announced the creation of the Susan C. Klassen Fund, which will support the work of PiRI for years to come.

"The fund honors the passion, inspiration, respect and integrity that Sue has brought to our work over the past 11 years," said Reed. "Much of

*"[It] honors the passion, inspiration, respect and integrity that Sue has brought to our work.... Much of PiRI's success is due to Sue's dedication to instilling restorative practices in courts, schools, and the community."*

*-Mary Reed,  
PiRI President*

PiRI's success is due to Sue's dedication to instilling restorative practices in courts, schools and the community. The fund will provide scholarships for training and support special events and other activities of our organization."

The evening ended with a circle of appreciation in which every person in attendance expressed words of gratitude for Sue's legacy and hope for the future of PiRI. Sue was also given a

cloth for use in future circles and a prayer shawl. ○

### PiRI Vision

We envision a world where restorative principles and practices are known, respected and used to redress harm, restore peace, improve relationships, reduce violence, promote healing and build healthy communities.

### PiRI Mission

Partners in Restorative Initiatives, located in western New York, works with schools, courts and communities to instill restorative practices through education, advocacy, training and facilitation.

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# Restorative Practices Going Strong at Monroe High School

As another school year comes to an end, PiRI is celebrating a three-year partnership with Monroe High School, a large 7-12 school in Rochester, New York. Since beginning this project, we have trained approximately 98% of the staff in restorative practices, which includes the use of Peacemaking Circles.

This year, every other Friday, the entire school participates in the circle process with 8-10 students meeting with a mentor teacher for approximately 45 minutes. Topics are provided but any group can also choose what they would like to discuss. PiRI trainers and Monroe staff have also worked together to train approximately 90 students in circle facilitation. Many of these students, called Monroe Ambassadors, meet after school once a week to brainstorm ways to make Monroe a better place for everyone.

Some teachers are now using circles in their academic classes to discuss homework, selections they have read in novels or texts or just to give everyone an equal voice in sharing ideas. Most teachers have also been trained in restorative conversations and are checking to make sure they are doing things “with” students rather “to” or “for” them.

Assistant principal Bernadette Regan has embraced community conferencing and is using this model with students and staff when wrongdoing occurs. Some of Monroe’s Student Ambassadors either help to co-facilitate these conferences or proudly serve as community members.

This fall, Monroe will change its disciplinary referral process to include additional restorative practices as a means of increasing the options that teachers have to work with students. Also, a restorative handbook is being prepared for staff members, students will be completing behavior contracts when they are involved in wrongdoing, Monroe will continue holding peace circles, and much more.



PiRI Trainers Mary Reed & Jeanne Carlivati with students and staff from the Restore Monroe Youth Leadership Camp

As the project’s fourth year begins, our hopes are to strengthen the planning team by adding more members, have more administrators use the community conferencing model, and continue training for any new staff members. Additionally, we would like to train 80 more students in circle facilitation and help to create a more complete evaluation plan of the work being done at Monroe.

Recently, when people from the State Education Department visited the building, part of their report reflected on the qualitative evidence of the progress that has been made over these past three years. Their recommendation was to continue with the implementation of restorative practices. PiRI looks forward to working together with the Monroe students and staff for another school year. ○

*talking piece* is the quarterly newsletter of Partners in Restorative Initiatives. A *talking piece* is used in Peace Circles to create a space for each person to talk and all the others to listen.

Editor: Karissa Sauder  
Contributing Writers: Jeanne Carlivati  
Isobel Davies  
Nancy Dhurjaty  
Mary Reed

Send mailing updates, corrections and submissions to: PiRI, 111 Hillside Avenue, Rochester, NY 14610

Archives at [www.pirirochester.org](http://www.pirirochester.org)



PiRI Designation Number 2486

## PiRI Trains School Resources Officers

At the end of June, Partners in Restorative Initiatives hosted a training for 30 Rochester City School District administrators and School Resource Officers, as well as counselors from the Family and Crisis Intervention Team (FACIT) of the Rochester City Police Department.

Trainers Mary Reed and Jeanne Carlivati introduced the principles of restorative practices and taught attendees about the specific processes that PiRI facilitates, with a particular focus on community conferencing. Participants also had the opportunity to practice their new skills through role plays.

The training was funded by a grant from the Feinbloom Foundation as part of an effort to reduce the number of school arrests within the Rochester City School District and to provide more effective options for both victims and offenders following student arrests through the use of restorative practices. As school personnel become more aware of the benefits of restorative practices, it is more likely that responders to conflict will consider restorative alternatives to punitive reactions like arrests and suspensions.

Rochester Police Chief James Sheppard and Elias Lopez, Director of Family and Victim Services, requested the training for School Resource Officers and FACIT staff members.

The Feinbloom grant will also support a collaborative effort, similar to the work at Monroe High School, to implement restorative practices in another city high school. ○

### *PiRI in the News*

Several local news sources covered the SRO training. See their reports here:

<http://rochester.ynn.com/content/548621/seminar-aimed-at-reducing-student-arrests/>

[http://rochesterhomepage.net/search-fulltext?nxd\\_id=259317](http://rochesterhomepage.net/search-fulltext?nxd_id=259317)

## International Visitors Seek Information on Restorative Practices

On May 26, PiRI introduced restorative practices to a group of Pakistani visitors. The nine-member delegation is traveling throughout the U.S. to learn about community dialogue and dispute resolution. Rev. Alan Newton, Mary Reed and Karissa Sauder participated in the session, sharing PiRI's restorative work in the courts and schools.

The group, comprised of judges, police officers, college personnel and community activists, affirmed the importance of respectful relationships as a basis for resolving conflict. Picture taking and a peace circle ended the session.

The delegation's visit was sponsored by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs through its International Visitor Leadership Program. Locally, it was hosted by Josephine Perinni of the Rochester International Council. Last year, PiRI was invited to share information on its programs with delegates from Israel and Palestine. ○



Rev. Alan Newton explains restorative practices to Pakistani delegates from the International Visitor Leadership Program.

UPCOMING  
EVENTS

### Piri Office Closed

August 1-5, 2011

### Gandhi Institute Open House

October 2, 2011 2-5 p.m.

Join us in celebrating a new location for the M.K. Gandhi Institute for Nonviolence! Details to be announced.

# PiRI Trains Livingston County Court & School Personnel

This spring, PiRI spent two days sharing information about restorative justice principles and practices with Livingston County officials and Avon Central School personnel. The training on April 29 and May 6 was part of a larger effort to extend the restorative work of the past four years in the Avon schools to the Avon community through its town courts.

The training, funded through the office of Livingston County District Attorney Tom Moran, was attended by several town judges and representatives from the Victim Services and Probation departments. Avon High School also sent representatives from its administration and staff.

PiRI representatives included Karissa Sauder, Program Assistant, Isobel Davies, Courts Coordinator, and Jude Lardner, a volunteer facilitator in training. Ed Minardo, former director of Genesee Justice, shared his experience with the



Training participants review materials about community conferencing and other restorative practices.

Batavia court system. Jeanne Carlivati and Mary Reed served as co-facilitators. ○



**For more information:**

(585)473-0970

[office@pirochester.org](mailto:office@pirochester.org)

[www.pirochester.org](http://www.pirochester.org)

**SAVE THE DATE**

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- Expert keynote speakers
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- Information on incorporating restorative practices into your community

## Courts Program Update

There have been some exciting recent developments in PiRI's work with the courts of Monroe County.

Whereas for some time we received referrals only from East Rochester court, we have now facilitated Community Conferences in Pittsford, Sweden and Irondequoit.

Recently, some of our facilitators met with Judge Joseph Valentino, Supervising Judge for the Seventh Judicial District. Judge Valentino showed an interest in learning more about Community Conferencing and has asked us to present to city and county court judges. We are looking forward to exploring the possibility of employing Community Conferencing at the felony level.

Finally, in May, we conducted a training session in Geneseo for some of the court personnel in Livingston County. There is a strong possibility that the great work that has been done in the Avon school district around restorative practices could now expand to the use of Community Conferencing in the Avon courts. ○

PiRI is a founding member of **Restorative Rochester**, a voluntary association of individuals and organizations united with one purpose: to see restorative practices used in all schools, courts, and communities in the city of Rochester.

Anyone is welcome to join! The group meets on the 3rd Thursday of every month at 111 Hillside Ave. For more information, please see [www.restorativerochester.org](http://www.restorativerochester.org). ○

## Reentry Program Starts Strong

PiRI, in collaboration with Step by Step of Rochester, has developed a Family Circles Reentry program, in which trained facilitators bring women from Monroe Correctional Facility together with their family members and other loved ones. In the strengths-based circle process, the group discusses how the woman's incarceration has affected her loved ones, working to repair those relationships, and developing a plan for her transition out of MCF.

Step by Step's Natalia Lopuchowycz reports below on the first Family Circle, held in June:

*"I am happy to announce the successful completion of the very first Family Reentry Circle through Step By Step's collaboration with PIRI. The circle was flawlessly facilitated by Isobel Davies and Kimberly Bunker, who mutually are responsible for the reuniting of a mother and son after 12 years of separation.*

*There are no words to express the intensity of emotions within the room on the evening of June 20th. I was personally involved within the circle as one our woman's supporters that could speak to her strengths and illustrate the woman I see and have come to know to her son. To shed light on the magic that occurred, the woman's son made some closing comments on how this process was for him. The young man admitted to having countless unanswered questions throughout his life up to the very hours of the circle, where he felt like he had been given all the answers he had spent a lifetime searching for. He continued to say that he could now grow up.*

*I believe we can all take this experience as a celebratory marker in the future successes of this collaborative program. There is an immense amount of work put into just one circle by all parties involved, which is all forgotten in the priceless moments of new beginnings.*

*We are already lining up future referrals and are very much looking forward to another circle in July. Hopefully, there will be many more good stories to share!"* ○



Isobel Davies, Natalia Lopuchowycz, Joyce McAndrew and Sue Klassen participate in a role play at the Reentry Family Circles training in March.

# PEOPLE OF PIRI...

Board secretary Kathy Sweetland was recently honored with the Witmer Award for Distinguished Service for her work at the University of Rochester. The text below was read at the award ceremony.

*presents Kathy Sweetland*

In her 36 years with the University, Kathy Sweetland's name has become synonymous with dedication, high ethical standards, trust, and leadership, colleagues say.

As University Intercessor, she has worked with faculty, staff, and students on resolving issues and concerns about harassment and discrimination. Those who have worked with Sweetland say she is a dedicated mediator, facilitator, and counselor who strives to achieve equitable treatment for all—and she carries out her role with grace, sensitivity, and tact.

Sweetland has been a leader in staff and faculty diversity initiatives, serving as a co-chair for the University's diversity and inclusion committee and on the faculty diversity officer committee. She coauthored several seminal papers that became a basis for the University's diversity and inclusion efforts, including the "White Paper on Diversity and Inclusion" in 2005.

Recently, Sweetland has explored creative new methods of dealing with conflict, including restorative justice practices. She also has championed the University's new Safe Space initiative, aimed at creating a safe environment for members of the GLBTQI community.

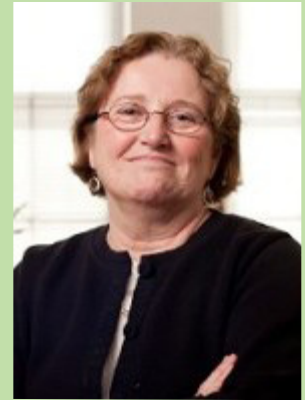


Image Credit:  
[www.rochester.edu](http://www.rochester.edu)

"Kathy has demonstrated a remarkable commitment to the University's mission and values, and over her successful career here, her commitment to all forms of inclusion has been evident in her work," reads her nomination letter from assistant provost Maggie Cassie and Stan Byrd, human resources manager of multicultural affairs and inclusion. "She reaches far beyond the University confines to bring new ideas, techniques, and methods back to campus to continually change the thinking of colleagues and leadership."

## GREAT NEWS!

PiRI recently received news of two grants that will further our work in significant ways. One, a \$14,000 grant from an anonymous donor, will go toward the ongoing work of the Monroe High School Restorative Practices Project. The other, a \$29,000 grant from an anonymous family foundation, is marked for a new restorative practices project at Wilson Commencement Academy.

Kit Miller, executive director of the M.K. Gandhi Institute for Nonviolence, was instrumental in securing these grants. Thank you, Kit!

We also celebrate and thank these donors. Their generosity creates the opportunity for Rochester's youth to go to school where they are safe, they belong, and they can be successful learners.

*Want to Read More About  
Restorative Practices?*

Check out the International Institute of  
Restorative Practices eForm at:

[http://www.iirp.org/lib\\_online\\_collection.  
php](http://www.iirp.org/lib_online_collection.php)

There, you'll find articles like "Huikahi Restorative Practices" by Loren Walker and Rebecca Greening, which explains the Reentry Family Circles process of PiRI's new program (p. 5).