



talking piece

August 2015

Bringing People Together

PiRI Vision

We envision a community in which restorative principles and values are known, respected and utilized to build relationships, repair harm, and strengthen communities.

PiRI Mission

Partners in Restorative Initiatives works to implement restorative practices in schools, communities and the justice system through advocacy, education, training and facilitation.

What a glorious summer we have had---more than enough rain to keep our gardens healthy and vibrant and lots of sun to enjoy outdoor activities.

As always here at Partners in Restorative Initiatives, this summer has been our busiest season, not only with our schools/education program but also with our board. Over the summer, we added four new members to our board: Chuck Allan, Mike Iacucci, Julie Burke, and Melisa Nichols. We are delighted to have them onboard and will profile each of them in our next issue of Talking Piece.

You'll find articles by Betty Reinhardt, Ed Minardo, and Jeanne Carlivati in this issue which we hope you'll find informative and inspirational.

Inspired by East High School Teachers

Contributed by Betty Reinhart

As a certified Peace Circle Trainer for PiRI I had the privilege and honor to help train three different groups of East High School Staff on June 29th, 30th and August 6th. I found these dedicated teachers inspiring whether they were rehired and coming back to East or newly hired under the University of Rochester's new structure. I loved hearing how each of them came to their individual paths in education during the two rounds of sharing their own stories. Although many were new to Restorative Practices they were fully engaged and willing to connect at deeper levels with their peers during this activity. I was very impressed with their willingness to share at a

personal level transforming the atmosphere of the circle from casual friendship to one of stronger relationships and empowering each other to be their best selves.

It also touched my heart and was beyond inspiring to listen and hear these teachers share about how important their passion is to not just teach, but teach in a City School and more specifically at East. Salaries, retirement pay or any other monetary incentives were not even mentioned. These teachers are totally in it for their compassion for the kids. So many of them shared moments when they were able to reach a student or students and how that moment opened their heart and ignited their desire to reach, teach and mentor these kids. Elevating the lives of their city students through their role as a teacher was their main purpose and passion. The idea that they would have built in time to build relationships, use peace circles and other restorative practices with kids excited most if not all, including those unsure in the early stages of the day. I am grateful for the opportunity to be a part of their journey forward and I have great hope for these truly caring East High School teachers and their students.



ROCHESTER COMMUNITY SUPPORT CIRCLE

Contributed by Ed Minardo

Ferguson, Staten Island, Baltimore, Charleston.....Rochester? Lately the news has been bursting with hotspots across our country which deal with controversy regarding the criminal justice system and the manner in which community residents, particularly people of color, are being treated. Locally, the killing of RPD officer Daryl Pierson almost one year ago, exposed local friction between the community and criminal justice officials that many feared would lead to further conflict on the streets.

It is within this context that an initiative was spawned to engage local CJ officials, college faculty and college students in a dialogue. Last December an initial meeting was held at the University of Rochester to discuss the interest level of potential participants in meeting monthly, in a Circle format, to become involved in a proactive process of shared perspectives. Students from RIT, UR and Brockport, along with faculty from these academic institutions and CJ professionals (law enforcement, probation, corrections and the judiciary) were all at the table. The consensus of the attendees, the vast majority being of local origin, was overwhelmingly enthusiastic about trying to do SOMETHING to help the community we all care about.

It has now been 8 months since that initial meeting and 4 completed Circles....the results? It is imperative to first recognize how difficult it is to find meeting times that allow all interested parties to attend! The Circle format is a wonderful platform to embrace individuals from different ethnicities, professions, ideologies and perspectives in a respectful dialogue to consider the national and local trajectory of CJ and community relations. It is evident that this diverse collection of individuals has more in common than expected.



Our Circles resemble the traditional format. We welcome participants, check in with each other, a brief opening ceremony and a review of agreed upon guidelines and values. A few provocative questions and we're off! Individuals shared personal and professional stories of growing up in the Rochester area and the struggles that they encountered. Students as well as professionals often talked about opportunities from unlikely sources to aide their recovery from self-destructive environments and to recognize their personal resilience to overcome the challenges they faced. Attitudes and experiences towards race, CJ, poverty, the seduction of multi-generational public assistance and many other topics were discussed. It became clear that both the CJ system and the community need to do some self-cleaning. It also became obvious that the Circle format and respectful dialogue allowed exploration of sensitive areas that are often avoided for fear of saying things from ignorance or lack of sensitivity that may become incendiary.

Although we have only just begun, there are many interested in staying involved with this process. This comment from one of our participants succinctly reflects what many of us believe: *I know for me personally, I enjoy coming out because it gives me a safe place to voice my opinions without fear of being judged. I feel that everyone understands and respects differences in opinions. One of the biggest perks for me is being able to have a voice within a group of people that are passionate enough to want to work together to make a difference.*

June Quote

"Few things can help an individual more than to place responsibility on him and to let him know that you trust him."

- Booker T. Washington



30 Days of Summer

by Jeanne Carlivati

For Rochester City School teachers and staff summer vacation began on June 29th, the first day they didn't have to report to school. Fast forward to September 4th, that would be the last day before Labor Day weekend, which for most students signals the official start of the 2015-2016 school year. Within that parameter, Partners in Restorative Initiatives had 50 potential days to provide training to school staffs in the use of restorative practices. As it turns out, before Labor Day Weekend, we'll have provided training on 30 of those days, to a staggering total of 578 educators and/or agency personnel!

Training will have consisted of 11 individual one day Introduction to Circle options, 3 three day comprehensive Peace Circle trainings, 3 Restorative Discipline trainings to broaden the understanding of how to use the process for wrong doing, Academic Circle trainings, Overviews of Restorative Practices for individual schools, relationship building for school staffs, ways to implement circles in Alternative to Suspension rooms and strategies to help support staffs to use the circle process to build positive relationships within individual classrooms.

From the Rochester City School District, we will have trained staff from East, Douglass and Wilson high schools, as well as teachers, psychologists, social workers, administrators, and building level principals from NRCS, and schools #17, #19, #22, #23, #29, #39, #41, #44, #45 and #50.

We also will have trained staff from Hilton, Fairport, Buffalo City Schools, Honeoye Falls-Lima, Midlakes, Webster, Hilton and the Center for Youth.

It has been an amazing summer which could never have happened without the expertise and dedication of the volunteers and trainers that comprise PiRI's Education Committee. A huge thank you to Helen Boehm Morelli, Mary Meissner, Betty Reinhart, Maureen Currie, Diana Vega, Barbara Brody, Barbara Drmacich, Cordula Kennell and our wonderful Office Manager, Michelle Woodworth.

Read more about East High School's 3 Day Peace Circle Training:

[Helping restore East through restorative classroom practices](http://www.democratandchronicle.com/story/opinion/blogs/editorial/2015/08/12/helping-restore-east-through-restorative-classroom-practices/31532595/)

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Take Action

You can support Partners in Restorative Initiatives in working toward a restorative community with your donation. Please see our website to donate via Pay Pal, or send directly to our address, or contribute through United Way.



LIVE UNITED 

PiRI Designation Number
2486

Looking forward...

- August 17 Restorative Practices Training for East High
- August 18 Restorative Practices Training for East High
- August 18 One Day Peace Circle Training for School No. 41 at PiRI
- August 19 Restorative Discipline Training at PiRI, 8:30 am-4:30 pm for East High staff
- August 20 1/2 Day Academic Circle Training, at PiRI 9:00 am-12:00 pm
- August 26 1/2 Day Training at Wilson Commencement School
- August 27 1/2 Day Training at School No. 17
- August 28 1/2 Day Training at School No. 17
- August 31 1/2 Day Training at School No. 41
- September 2 One Day Peace Circle training at Hilton High School
- September 4 One Day Peace Circle training at Center for Youth
- September 19 One Day Peace Circle training for School No. 45 at PiRI
- September 22 International Visitor Delegation Workshop
- October 9 One Day Peace Circle training at Webster Schroeder High School



Invitation to participate in a Family Group Conferencing Role Play

Jeanette Schmidt will be including a role play of Family Group Conferencing (child welfare context) in the Restorative Practices Social Work course she is teaching at Nazareth College this fall. Participation provides an excellent introduction to the practice of FGC.

The role play should ideally have 20 or so participants, but she will only have 6 students. Therefore she would like to invite you to participate in this role play.

Should you decide to join in, you are also invited to the lecture on FGC that will take place the week following the role play. However, you can come to be part of the role play without attending the following lecture. Both events are gratis.

Please email Jeanette at jeabry@gmail.com by Thursday 15th October if you would like to make use of this opportunity.

Background information for the role play will be sent before the event.

FGC Role play and Debriefing:
Monday 19th October 5:30-8:15 pm

Additional discussion regarding FGC:
Monday 26th October 5:30-8:15 pm

Venue: Metro Centre, 55 St Paul Street, Rochester NY 14604 in the Golden Eagle Room

Parking is on the street.

talking piece

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

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