

Program for crime victims expanded

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Communities for Restorative Justice, a program that puts crime victims face-to-face with those who victimized them for therapeutic healing and learning, has expanded to Groton and Littleton thanks to a \$15,000 donation from the Middlesex Savings Charitable Foundation.

Jennifer Larson Sawin, executive director of the nonprofit that runs the program, said the donation would be used to help train police officers and community volunteers in Groton and Littleton as well as other interested towns on how to act and assist in restorative justice cases.

She said the money would also go toward getting school administrators, city and municipal government officers, substance abuse councilors, and parent/teacher groups up to speed on the program, which relies entirely on the donations of community organizations and individuals:

"[They] need to be aware of the program and what we do."

The plan started in 2000 when Concord Police Chief Leonard Wetherbee saw victims of crime were often frustrated by the criminal justice system, she said. Concord supported the first restorative justice program in the area and brought victims and young nonviolent offenders face-to-face, allowing victims to ask questions and not feel threatened and offenders to see how their actions affected those they harmed.

Carlisle created a similar program in 2002, Acton followed in 2007, and Boxborough jumped in soon after. Groton and Littleton are the most recent to join in. Sawin said there are early talks with Westford about starting a program there as well.

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Abstract (Document Summary)

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