



THE TALKING PIECE

FINDING COURAGE

C4RJ Film Debuts in October

At long last, we can offer an inside look into our innovative approach to justice with the release of our film "Finding Courage: Addressing Harm with Restorative Justice Circles," starting in October. And *you* are invited! The 30-minute film, produced by C4RJ, will be shown for the first time in Concord on Wednesday, Oct. 23, at 6pm at Temple Kerem Shalom, 659 Elm St. It



We celebrate the end of the second day of shooting early this spring. Jennifer Larson Sawin (C4RJ Exec. Dir., center) and Christy Barbee (C4RJ Chief Case Coordinator, right) stand with the Reflection Films team.

will screen in other venues over the fall and winter and will be an integral part of our efforts to display the power of restorative justice.

"It's not Hollywood or the Big Apple. This film is from here, by us, about our work," said **Chief Barry Neal** of the Concord Police Department. "I'm eager for others to see this well-done piece."

The film features professional actors, C4RJ's own volunteers, and **Det. Keith Campbell** (Acton) in a very realistic depiction of the circle process, based on a composite of previous cases. Viewers hear from individuals who have been through the process and who offer moving testimony about their experience. **Chief Len Wetherbee**, retired from the Concord PD and C4RJ co-founder, also offers insight into the program's origins.

"This film fulfills a long-held hope of ours. Now we can show this process to folks curious about us without breaching confidentiality in an actual case. It's going to be an incredible tool for our work," said C4RJ Director **Jennifer Larson Sawin**.

Following the film, Larson Sawin and Concord **Chief Barry Neal** will lead a discussion on the topic. Debra's Natural Gourmet will cater refreshments. Donations will be gratefully accepted. The event is free but advance registration is required. Visit www.C4RJfilm.eventbrite.com to register or call **978.318.3447**.

FALL HARVEST AUCTION

Bid on a Bounty of Goods and Help C4RJ

Got a hankering for travel? Maybe a South African safari for two? Golf at an exclusive Fort Myers, Florida, resort? Crete? Barbados? Antigua? Or what about a five-course dinner with wine pairings in a lovely private home?

These are just a few of the offerings in the online auction to benefit C4RJ from **September 18-22**. Please help us and help yourself to the fun and easy Bidding for Good site, www.biddingforgood.com/C4RJ. Registration is free. Register soon to stay on top of featured items.

Our fall auction follows on the heels of our successful spring auction in which we cleared \$12,900 to support our mission of providing a restorative response to crime. Our goal this season is \$5,000. We thank our sponsors, Woodman & Eaton P.C., the Howes Insurance Group, Nashawtuc Architects, DG Communications, Budget Printing, and C4RJ volunteers.



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Bill would extend RJ options in Commonwealth

A bill is making its way through the Massachusetts Legislature that would create an option for law enforcement and courts to refer certain criminal cases to restorative justice programs in lieu of, or alongside, other responses. Sound familiar? The bill describes processes very similar to those used by Communities for Restorative Justice (C4RJ) for the last 13 years.

On July 16, C4RJ-affiliated folks joined officials and interested parties from around the state at a hearing on S.B. 52 before the Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities to describe restorative justice (RJ) and demonstrate how it can be an effective response to crime and wrongdoing.

In her testimony, C4RJ Executive Director **Jennifer Larson Sawin** testified about her background growing up in Southern Africa, where restorative justice was an important part of the post-apartheid process, and her graduate work in Belfast and Dublin. "I know we can use these same principles and practices in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts," she said. "Demand is booming."

Also testifying was Bedford Police Chief **Robert Bongiorno**, a member of C4RJ's Board of Directors; **Superior Court Judge John Cratsley** (retired, and also a C4RJ board member) provided a letter of support. All three spoke of the power RJ has to reduce the drag on the courts while also providing opportunities for

victims to have a greater role and voice and to help offenders make right and learn.

Speakers cited advantages found in restorative justice, including a higher satisfaction rate, 89%, among victims engaging in the process compared with 57% of those experiencing the criminal justice system, according to one national study. Recidivism has also been found to be substantially lower among persons responsible for crime who have engaged with victims and communities through restorative justice (16% in C4RJ cases) compared with those involved in the criminal justice system (39% according to the study).

Also supporting the bill were the **Massachusetts Major City Chiefs Association** (34 jurisdictions), the 12 C4RJ-partnered police chiefs, **Middlesex County District Attorney Marian Ryan**, Lowell Juvenile Court **Judge Jay Blitzman**, **ROCA Inc.** of Chelsea, and **Erin Freeborn**, director of an emerging RJ program at the Lowell Juvenile Court.

The bill would allow for referrals to RJ programs at various points in a criminal case, including pre-complaint, at arrest, pre-arraignment, at sentencing or post-sentencing. Referral would be contingent on victim wishes; that is, victims wishing to have their case pursued in court would have that option. For more information on the bill, visit www.c4rj.com/news.headlines.php.

The courts are overworked. If all the parties can get some satisfaction using something less elaborate [as S.B. 52 would allow], let's go for it. Judges and other court officials would welcome the change.

Sen. Michael Barrett (Bedford), co-chair Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities; S.B. 52 co-sponsor



Police officials from around the state presented a "sea of blue" in support of the bill. They included uniformed officers familiar to C4RJ, including (L-R) Sgt. Matt Pinard of Littleton (left), Lt. Leo Crowe of Carlisle, Det. Mike Sallese of Stow, and Chief Robert Bongiorno of Bedford.



Prof. Susan Maze-Rothstein (Northeastern Law School), Nikki Spencer (C4RJ volunteer), John Ward and Dana Betts (ROCA, Inc.) prepare to offer testimony.



Images used with permission from the artist

Drawing on strength

In our restorative circles, participants look for unique, personal ways to address the harm done to those affected—while also building on the talents and strengths of those responsible for crime. The notecards featured above are the work of a young artist, who agreed to create them to make amends for the offense done to others (among other obligations stipulated in the circle’s plan of repair.) Those affected were delighted to receive the cards for their own use.

Goin’ to school!

Across the country, school districts are taking cues from restorative justice to improve school climate and respond in a more inclusive way in instances of harm and misbehavior. We are proud to say that we have begun working with schools as well. **Chief Case Coordinator Christy Barbee** has been working in a program at Charlestown High School, partnering with **Carolyn Boyes-Watson** and **Erica Bronstein** from the Center for Restorative Justice at Suffolk University. Barbee and C4RJ Case Coordinator **Candace Julyan** have worked with Bronstein training teachers and administrators in the Freshman Academy at Fitchburg High School. C4RJ is in discussions with other schools regarding training in restorative practices.

The latest exciting news: the Boston Public Schools in September updated its code of conduct to require all Boston schools to use “non-exclusionary approaches” to discipline before resorting to suspension or expulsion. Restorative practices are one of the highlighted alternative approaches that the new code requires.

Sinnott, Cataldo Join C4RJ Board

C4RJ welcomes to its board of directors Cathy Sinnott and Joe Cataldo. They join the 13-member board that directs policy and finances for the organization.

Catherine Sinnott is the attorney in charge of the Children and Family Law Unit of the Committee for Public Counsel Services and advocates for families in greater Lowell and Lawrence who are involved in the court system. She recognizes C4RJ as a hopeful alternative to the court-system of justice and a way to restore a healthy balance within families and communities, with compassion for all involved. She resides in Concord.

Joe Cataldo has lived in Littleton for 36 years and is the owner of MJ Cataldo Landscape and Construction. He served on the Littleton Board of Selectman for three years. He brings to the work a dad’s sensibilities. He learned about restorative justice when he participated in one of C4RJ’s circles as a person affected by crime.

WORKING FOR JUSTICE Joining our Ranks

As the scope of our work grows, so does our need for smart, thoughtful volunteers. Eight such people stepped up this spring at our two-day training, including **Chris Titi** of Ayer; **Al Carpenter** and **Mike Epstein** from Carlisle; **Terri Ackerman**, **Karen Belinky**, and **Bill Roop** from Concord; and **Rebecca Metcalfe Stone** from Medford.

All are beginning their work as circle participants and facilitators for persons responsible for crime and for persons affected by crime. Stone will serve as a case coordinator with the Red circle team.

VOLUNTEER Calling on our neighbors

We’re looking for volunteers from the communities of Ayer, Littleton, Wellesley and Stow, and the surrounding areas to help provide community input into our work in those towns. Our next two-day training is scheduled **October 4 and 5**.

To learn about volunteering, visit www.c4rj.com/getinvolved.teamspirit.php. A new volunteer application is available there. For more information, contact us at info@c4rj.com or call 978.318.3447.

UP, UP, AND AWAY Spring donors make a big difference!

This spring two anonymous donors offered a dollar-for-dollar match up to \$6,000 for C4RJ. Eighty-five donors responded with a total of nearly \$9,000. Thanks to all 85—and to our mysterious challengers. We’re pretty sure they wear capes!





COMMUNITIES FOR RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

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About C4RJ

Communities for Restorative Justice (C4RJ) is a community-police partnership that offers restorative justice to those affected by crime. Restorative justice recognizes that crime is a violation of people and relationships, not just a violation of law. Police refer cases to us. In the aftermath of wrongdoing, our "circle" process includes in the decision-making those affected by crime: victims, offenders, loved ones, supporters, community members, and law enforcement officials.

This newsletter, *The Talking Piece*, is named for an object (often a river stone) passed around the circle to engage individuals in the deliberations. The person holding the talking piece speaks while others listen. With this newsletter, we are passing the talking piece to you and would love to hear your views on our work. Contact us at info@c4rj.com or by calling 978.318.3447 to relay your thoughts.

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