



## Join VOMA in Celebrating International Restorative Justice Week NOVEMBER 12 – 19, 2006

### CREATIVE PARTNERSHIPS & COLLABORATIVE ACTION

*VOMA remains committed to its mission to inspire, build coalitions, and share information that enhances the development of restorative justice principles and practices that create opportunities for dialogue between victims, those who offend, and their communities. International Restorative Justice week is an outreach opportunity for VOMA members and colleagues to raise awareness about restorative justice and its application in all areas of our lives.*

*This year the VOMA board of directors is pleased to announce a Mini-grant program to support members' celebration of 2006 Restorative justice Week. VOMA members who engage in a public event recognizing RJ Week can request grants between \$100 and \$250. An application is included in this mailing. Additional copies may be requested from the VOMA office at 612-874-0535, by email at [voma@voma.org](mailto:voma@voma.org), or downloaded from the VOMA website at [www.voma.org](http://www.voma.org).*

*For the second year, we are pleased to provide a pamphlet of information and resources for you to use in planning your local celebration.*

*The 2006 VOMA Board of Directors*

### History of Restorative Justice Week

For more than a decade, organizations and individuals around the world have celebrated International Restorative Justice Week (RJ Week). The purpose of RJ Week is to raise public awareness that "restorative justice not only asks the right questions, but challenges the community to participate with local, state, and national governments in implementing this model of justice." (Canadian web site)

RJ Week began in England in 1975 as a one-day event called "Prisoner's Sunday." Initiated by prison chaplaincies, the event was a day of remembrance and compassion for incarcerated men and women. Shortly after being introduced in England, the event was adopted in Canada and several other Commonwealth nations.

In 1995, the day was extended to a full week and the name was changed to "Prisoner's Week."

One year later the name changed one last time to "Restorative Justice Week."

The new name reflects two fundamental shifts from the event's original focus.

1) RJ Week includes all who are affected by a crime—victims and their families, those who offend and their families, criminal justice officials, and the entire community.

2) Although "Prisoner's Sunday" originally had a Christian focus, RJ Week now reaches out to all faiths and to secular audiences; and it includes a wide range of activities.

#### Asking the Right Questions

The American public, and the citizenry of many other nations, is increasingly expressing dissatisfaction with the current justice system. One problem is that the system focuses on punishment and not the real questions that could impact the survival and healing journeys of victims, the accountability and future develop-

ment of those who offend, and the capacity of the community to meet the needs of its members. These are precisely the questions that restorative justice asks and attempts to answer.

## **New Resource**

### **Handbook of Restorative Justice**

Edited by Gerry Johnstone (Hull University) and Daniel W. Van Ness (Prison Fellowship International, Washington DC)

This book provides a comprehensive and authoritative account and analysis of restorative justice, one of the most rapidly growing phenomena in the field of criminology and justice studies. In the last decade it has become a central topic in debates about the future of criminal justice. Hundreds of restorative justice schemes are being developed around the world, and they are attracting more and more attention from criminal justice academics, professionals and policy-makers. This book aims to meet this need, drawing together leading authorities on the subject from around the world in order to:

- Elucidate and discuss the key concepts and principles of restorative justice
- Explain how the campaign for restorative justice arose and developed into the influential social movement it is today
- Describe the variety of restorative justice practices, explain how they have developed in various places and contexts, and critically examine their rationales and effects
- Identify and examines key tensions and issues within the restorative justice movement
- Bring a variety of disciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives to bear upon the understanding and assessment of restorative justice

## **Free Resource**

VOMA Board member Sheri Gatts recommends the RJ Week Kit from RJ & Dispute Resolution Branch, Correctional Service of Canada, in Ottawa, Ontario. There are some powerful stories included and two great posters - in both English & Spanish. If you would like to get a kit, here is the link

[http://www.csc-scc.gc.ca/text/portals/rj/rj2006/ord\\_e.shtml](http://www.csc-scc.gc.ca/text/portals/rj/rj2006/ord_e.shtml) (order form for print materials)

[http://www.csc-scc.gc.ca/text/portals/rj/rj2006/lett\\_e.shtml](http://www.csc-scc.gc.ca/text/portals/rj/rj2006/lett_e.shtml) (available online materials)

[http://www.csc-scc.gc.ca/text/portals/rj/rj2006/even\\_e.shtml](http://www.csc-scc.gc.ca/text/portals/rj/rj2006/even_e.shtml) (events)

## **More Free Resources for VOMA Members**

Through the generosity of Fellowship of Reconciliation, the VOMA office also has several copies the FOR Witness Magazine special edition on Restorative Justice. VOMA also has pins, extra copies of the recent Justice Connections newsletter, Little Books of Peace, paper bookmarks with appropriate quotes, and VOMA brochures.

If you want any of these to support your RJ Week activities, they are free while supplies last. Please contact the VOMA office at 612-874-0535 or email [voma@voma.org](mailto:voma@voma.org).

## **Share Your Experience**

Let us know how you and/or your organization celebrated International RJ Week.

# Ideas for RJ Week Activities in Your Community

## Introduction

*One of the best sources of ideas and suggestions for celebrating International RJ Week we found was a guide prepared by the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction in 2002. The Department continues to support and encourage organizations statewide to participate in International RJ Week. They have graciously given us permission to include excerpts from their guide in this resource pamphlet. Many thanks to our friends in Ohio!*

## UNDERSTANDING THE CURRENT SYSTEM

- Hold an educational forum on justice. Invite a judge, police officer, prosecutor, municipal official, corrections or parole board official, chaplain, victim, ex-offender, family members of a victim or offender, local victim's/criminal justice agencies or volunteers. Identify one of these individuals as someone who can also speak about restorative justice.
- Contact a local victims organization to learn more about the realities that victims face.
- Sponsor an open house. Advertise the event in local newspapers, and send out invitations to crime victims and service providers in your area. Encourage discussion and dialogue with inmates and prison officials.
- Promote visits of justice officials who are also familiar with restorative justice to speak in local schools.
- Encourage youth leaders or youth to attend a video night. Show and discuss a film depicting some aspect of the criminal justice system.
- Ask victims who have had a positive influence on public policy or community safety to speak at your location.

- Consider sharing your expertise and knowledge with an organization or group that is interested in learning more about the system.
- Create a bulletin board or other visual depiction of how victims and those who serve them are moving "Wisdom Gained Through Experience."
- Seek opportunities for training and cross training, involving other professionals and community members.

## UNDERSTANDING RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

- If this is all new to you, borrow a book or video about restorative justice (see Resource Directory for List of Titles), spend some time in personal reflection or prayer, and/or arrange to meet with a resource person to discuss restorative justice.
- If you are a member of a faith community, plan a restorative justice worship service and/or form a study group to explore justice issues. Use service bulletins as educational tools. Set aside a day of prayer for the justice system.
- If you are an employee or employer, set up an information table on restorative justice or demonstrate a victim-offender dialogue with a trained facilitator.
- Consider setting up a study group of interested people to discuss how restorative justice can affect services to offenders, victims and the community. Ask for training in restorative justice.

## ACTION FOR RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

- Develop a local media kit and ask your mayor to proclaim the day.

- Organize a restorative justice event in your community or attend one and give your honest feedback to the organizers.
- Sponsor a “moment of silence” to pay tribute to victims of crime and those who serve them.
- Sponsor a poster and essay contest. Challenge participants to write about how we as a community can move “Wisdom Gained Through Experience.” Create a panel of judges consisting of victims, criminal justice professionals, civic leaders, and victim advocates. Display the artwork and essays during 2005 RJ Week; give certificates to all participants.
- Create opportunities for members of the public to talk with offender/victims about the ways to build community.
- Celebrate volunteers who are working for restorative justice and peace.
- If you have had a positive restorative justice experience as a victim, offender, or other citizen, share your story.
- Explore options for volunteering your services in a restorative justice program or ministry.
- Develop a restorative justice approach to some aspect of your community, family, faith, work or prison life.
- If you have expertise in human rights, gender or multi-cultural issues, work with restorative justice planners to ensure equality and diversity in services.
- Ribbon Campaigns are an easy way to enable a large number of people to show their support for restorative justice.
- Art Exhibits raise public awareness through creative expression. Invite victims of crime, offenders, community members, staff, etc. to submit pieces that reflect the theme “Wisdom Gained Through Experience” in the context of their personal experiences.
- Survivor Poetry reading can be organized for advocates, families and survivors of crime. Encourage participants to read their own poetry, or a poem that they find especially meaningful.
- A Tree of Life can be displayed in your office. Construct the trunk, branches, and leaves of the tree from construction paper, and place it on a wall in a visible place, such as your lobby. Allow victims and families to place different colored ribbons on the tree, representing different crimes. Alternatively, place ribbons on a living tree.
- Have staff, offenders, and community members, etc. sign Pledges Against Violence. Have them trace their hands and add them to a display entitled, “hands are Not for Hurting.” Adding their hands to the display symbolizes their commitment to end violence.

*The horizon leans forward  
Offering you space  
To place new steps of change*

— Maya Angelou

## **SPECIAL EVENT IDEAS**

- Candlelight Vigils are one of the most popular and inspirational ways to honor victims of crime. Host your vigil at an easily accessible site to get the most exposure and participation.

## **INTERNATIONAL RESTORATIVE JUSTICE WEEK**

### **COUNTRIES PARTICIPATING IN INTERNATIONAL RJ WEEK**

Canada  
U.K.  
Ireland  
The Netherlands  
Australia  
New Zealand  
South Africa  
Congo

## Frequently Asked Questions about Restorative Justice

*The Ohio RJ Week Planning and Resource Guide also includes "Frequently Asked Questions". We've included them along with a few others for your reference. You can add them in a handout, include them in a press kit, or use them to open a forum on Restorative Justice.*

### **What is meant by the term Restorative Justice?**

Restorative Justice is a way of thinking about the justice process and its key stakeholders: victims, offenders, communities, and justice professionals. Restorative justice recognizes that crime is a violation of real people who are hurt by crime in very real and often lasting ways. The underlying principle of Restorative Justice is identifying ways to repair the harm caused by crime.

### **How is restorative justice different from the usual way justice is determined?**

Historically, those who are most impacted by crime have been left out of the justice process. Often, victims have been relegated to the sidelines while others in the justice system have made decisions that affected their lives and well being in very real ways. Restorative justice identifies victims as key stakeholders in the justice process and ensures that they are informed, involved, and have opportunities to directly participate.

### **Why would that be better than simply sending the offender to prison?**

Using restorative justice does not necessarily exclude a prison sentence, but it does give a new meaning to the term "pay one's debt to society." Under restorative justice, an offender can recognize their debt to the victim and the community. They are encouraged to accept responsibility and try to make amends directly to those who have been hurt by their crime. (Source: Prison Fellowship International, [www.pficjr.org](http://www.pficjr.org))

### **What are some examples of restorative justice?**

Victim offender dialogue, community service, citizen circles, and victim awareness/impact classes are just a few examples of restorative

practices taking place in prisons, adult parole offices, and local communities.

### **Do offenders get "credit" for participating in RJ activities?**

Participation in restorative practices is voluntary for both victims and offenders. Offenders do not receive "credit" for their participation and it does not affect their chances of receiving parole or any type of early release.

### **Why would a victim want to speak to offenders?**

Some victims, not all, have a desire to speak to the offender so they may tell him or her exactly how their life has been affected. Some also have questions about the crime that only the offender can answer. "Why did you choose my daughter?" "What were my son's last words?" "What exactly happened when you broke into my mother's home?" Often, these questions were not answered during the formal court process.

### **How does restorative justice apply to my job and me?**

Restorative Justice is a way of thinking, not one particular program. Whether you work as a corrections officer, a teacher, a parole officer or a substance abuse coordinator, the idea of restorative justice can be applied in any setting. Each of us should operate with an understanding of how our behavior affects all stakeholders and a willingness to seek restorative approaches in our daily responsibilities.

### **What role can community members and or civic groups play in restorative justice?**

Community members are a vital piece of the restorative justice puzzle. Both victims and offenders need the support of their community as they work to move forward in their lives. There are many roles community members can fill. A few examples are serving as mentors, providing employment opportunities, spiritual guidance and much needed input and insight in decisions made within the justice system.

### **What does making amends mean?**

True offender accountability is not only accepting responsibility for one's criminal behavior, but also taking steps toward repairing the harm. Some offenders participate in community service projects related to their crime. Others may pay restitution or make formal apologies to those they've hurt. Amends can take many shapes and forms depending on the circumstances of a crime.

### **Does restorative justice actually work?**

Most definitely. Its success has been seen around the globe and the increase in the use of such restorative measures as mediation in civil, matrimonial, family, labor, and other conflict situations is a testimony of its effectiveness. Results, to date, indicate that victims who have participated in a restorative justice program experienced a far higher rate of satisfaction than they had previously gained from the mainstream justice system. Often, such an experience can be the key to healing and being able to achieve closure. Offenders are often inspired to make whatever steps are necessary to change their lives in positive ways to make amends. This all helps to build community peace. (Source: Prison Fellowship International, [www.pficjr.org](http://www.pficjr.org))

### **What is community justice?**

Community justice is a way of viewing, understanding and responding to crime and the effects it has on victims, communities and offenders. Crime is recognized as harm done to a person(s) and/or community and the aim of justice is to promote understanding, accountability and healing. Offenders are held personally responsible to their victim(s) and/or community for making amends and, to the extent it is possible, helping to repair the damage and injuries they caused.

### **Where did the idea of RJ come from?**

The idea of bringing together a victim of a crime and the person who committed that crime is based on age-old values of justice, accountability, and restoration. The first "Victim Offender Reconciliation Program" was started in Kitchener, Ontario, Canada in 1976; the first VORP in the United States was started in Elkhart, Indiana in

1978. In 1990, there were approximately 150 such programs; in 2000, there were more than 1200 programs worldwide. (Source: VOMA website at [www.voma.org](http://www.voma.org))

## **Resources**

### **Restorative Justice Web Sites**

- Association for Conflict Resolution: [www.acresolution.org](http://www.acresolution.org)
- Community Justice Exchange: [www.communityjustice.org](http://www.communityjustice.org)
- International Institute of Restorative Practices: [www.restorativepractices.org](http://www.restorativepractices.org)
- Victim Offender Mediation Association (VOMA): [www.voma.org](http://www.voma.org)
- Victim-Offender Reconciliation Program: [www.vorp.com](http://www.vorp.com)
- Restorative Justice Online [www.restorativejustice.org](http://www.restorativejustice.org)
- Restorative Justice Sites <http://ssw.che.umn.edu/rjp>
- Real Justice Conferencing in Criminal Justice: [www.realjustice.org](http://www.realjustice.org)
- Restorative Justice Online Notebook: [www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/rest-just](http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/rest-just)

### **Organizations to "Google"**

- International Victimology
- National Center for Victims of Crime
- National Crime Victims Research and Treatment Center
- National Organization for Victim Assistance
- Victim-Assistance Online
- National Association for Community Mediation

### **Recommended Reads**

*The Little Book of Restorative Justice*, Howard Zehr. Good Books, 2002.

*Restoring Justice* (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition), Daniel Van Ness and Karen Heetderks Strong. Anderson Publishing Co., 2001.

*Critical Issues in Restorative Justice*, Howard Zehr and Barb Toews, eds. Criminal Justice Press and Willan Publishing, 2004.

*Restorative Justice: A Vision for Healing and Change*, Susan Sharpe. Mediation and Restorative Justice Centre, Edmonton, Alberta, 1998.

*Transcending – Reflections of Crime Victims*, Howard Zehr. Good Books, 2001.

*Azimi's Bardo – A Father's Journey from Murder to Forgiveness*, Azim Khamisa with Carol Goldman. Rising Star Press, 1998.

*Restorative Justice: International Perspectives* Burt Galaway and Joe Hudson, eds. Kugler Publications and Criminal Justice Press, 1996

*Justice as Healing: Indigenous Ways* Wanda D. McCaslin, Editor, Living Justice Press 2005

**For Other Books and Resources:** Visit the VOMA web site at [www.voma.org](http://www.voma.org). Past newsletters have are downloadable and have articles and book reviews. The web site also has an extensive RJ bibliography and videography. And, use the **VOMA Listserv** to get ideas and suggestions from your colleagues in the field.