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TO: Members of the Life Enrichment Committee  
FROM: Councilmember Desley Brooks  
DATE: December 3, 2013

RE: An Informational Report and Overview Of The Restorative Community  
Conferencing Program

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Attached for your reference is a report prepared by Community Works – Restorative Community Conferencing which provides an overview of the Restorative Justice Program run by Community Works. Representatives from the Restorative Community Conferencing Program will be presenting the informational report and will be available to answer questions.

Respectfully submitted,

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Desley Brooks –Councilmember Dist. 6  
Chair of Life Enrichment Committee

Item:   3    
Life Enrichment Comte.  
December 3, 2013

**Project WHAT!**  
**One Family**  
**Women Rising/Rising Voices**  
**Resolve to Stop the Violence Project**  
**ROOTS**  
**Restorative Community Conferencing**  
**Young Men's Reentry Program**  
**Social Justice Arts Programming**  
**The Welcome Home Project**

**Programs**

**Community Works programs include:**



Youth working to educate about the impact of parental incarceration



School-based programs for youth with incarcerated parents

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**LIFE ENRICHMENT CMTE.**

**DEC 03 2013**



**communityworks**

**R.C.C.**

Youth diversion program with restorative conferencing for victims, offenders, and their community

Case Management and Expressive Arts Internship for formerly incarcerated young women

**One Family**

Parent Education and Contact Visiting inside San Francisco County Jails

Restorative Justice based program for youth and adults, in custody and post-release

# The Welcome Home Project

Sharing the stories of the formerly incarcerated who have been successful at turning their lives around

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“Restorative justice is a justice which seeks not to punish and inflict more harm, but to heal and repair the harm. It is a justice which seeks to restore broken lives and relationships and communities rather than shatter them further. For restorative justice, the measure of success is not how much punishment is inflicted but how much harm is repaired and prevented.”

*Fania E. Davis*  
*Executive Director and Founding Member*  
*Restorative Justice for Oakland Youth (RJOY)*

“During the past quarter century, restorative justice has demonstrated that it can address victims’ needs while holding offenders accountable for the harm they have caused. Just as importantly, it has shown great promise as a way to empower and re-energize local communities.”

*Howard Zehr*  
*Professor of Sociology & Restorative Justice*  
*Eastern Mennonite University*



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Restorative Community Conferencing

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE is a community based approach to dealing with crime, the effects of crime, and crime prevention.

A restorative justice process works from a belief that the path to justice lies in problem solving and healing rather than punishment or isolation.

Principles that guide restorative justice:

- First and foremost, crime is an act against people and relationships.
- By causing harm, a person creates an obligation to the victim and the community.
- By meeting these obligations, the person who has harmed has taken responsibility for his or her actions, and has begun to understand and value relationships with other people and the community.

## THE GOALS OF RESTORATIVE JUSTICE PRACTICES

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- The person who was harmed is involved in the process and is satisfied with the outcome.
- The person who harmed understands how his/her action affected others and takes responsibility for those effects.
- A plan of action is created to help repair the harms done and address the reasons for the offense.
- Both the victim and the young person who caused the harm get a sense of closure, and are reintegrated into the community.

## RESTORATIVE COMMUNITY CONFERCING

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A Restorative Community Conference (RCC) is a two to three hour meeting for those affected by crime to hold the young person who harmed directly accountable to the person who was harmed. The group will also try to determine why the offending happened and how to prevent future reoffending. Participants include a youth who has caused harm, his or her family, the victim(s) with their support, and possibly a member of law enforcement. The focus is on doing right by the person who was harmed, not on punishment. The youth and their family, with victim and community input, are empowered to come up with a plan to address the harm and do right by the victim.

## WHY HOLD AN RCC?

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Restorative Community Conferencing is being used throughout the United States and the world. Research shows that RCCs can:

- Help heal the harm done;
- Give the victim a voice in the outcome;
- Prevent reoffending;
- Involve families in decision-making;
- Support communities to work together.

## WHAT WILL HAPPEN AT THE CONFERENCE?

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### Step One:

Information is shared about 1) The actual offense; 2) How it harmed the victim and the community; 3) Why the person committed the crime; and 4) What is needed to repair the harm and prevent future offending.

### Step Two:

The youth who caused the harm and his or her family meet in a separate room to decide 1) how to try to take care of the harm done and 2) what support the youth needs to stay on the right track. The youth then writes up an action plan.

### Step Three:

Everyone comes back together and the restorative plan is presented. Participants decide whether the plan meets the needs of the victim and community and if changes are needed, and work toward full agreement from everyone involved. If the group can't come to agreement, the case is sent back to the referring agency, such as the police, school, probation, or the court.

## WHAT CHOICE DO I HAVE?

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Participation in a RCC is completely voluntary. However, most people who have caused harm or were affected by a crime chose to attend an RCC so that they can be heard and to have a say in the outcome.

Also, young people are less likely to commit future crimes when they understand how they've harmed others financially, emotionally, and/or physically. No one can explain this better than the victim.

## WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

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The young person starts doing the tasks on his/her plan and checks in weekly with the person monitoring the plan. If the plan isn't going according to schedule, the youth and others in the RCC might come back together to determine what's gone wrong and what can be done to get the plan back on track. Upon successful completion of the plan, all the participants are notified. If the plan isn't completed despite efforts to get the plan back on track, the case is sent back to the referring agency.

## BENEFITS AND RESULTS

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- Offers victims the right to participate in a meaningful way
- Encourages creative, positive, and workable solutions
- Reduces reoffending and addresses underlying causes that lead to crime
- Improves family interactions
- Builds community

## Restorative Community Conferencing

This Restorative Justice program run by Community Works has the following components:

1. **Youth Admit Involvement.** Youth are required to admit their role in the crime. We meet with the youth and their support community (parent/guardian, coach, friend – anyone who helps them do right in the world) where the youth tells the story of what happened and their involvement. This is necessary for the youth to enroll in the program. To prevent re-victimization we will not allow youth to meet with the victims or participate in the program if they are not owning their actions.
2. **Participation is Voluntary.** The program is voluntary. Youth and their families have to opt in or out. This allows the youth to have control and encourages responsibility.
3. **Non-Adversarial meeting with the Victim.** After all parties are prepped a face-to-face meeting between the youth and victim(s) of their crime occurs. This makes plain for the youth the full impact of their crime, which, in turn, encourages them to view the victim as a person. It also affords the victim the opportunity to have their questions answered, make statements to the youth and participate in determining the best way for the youth to right the wrong they committed. Others at the meeting can include: law enforcement, community members, professionals and others with a stake in the incident.
4. **Case Management Support.** Out of the meeting a “plan” is agreed upon whereby the youth does right by the victim and others harmed. A case manager supports the youth in completion of these tasks. A plan involving an assault at a school might include: Reading of an apology letter to open the conference, making the victim a bracelet, speaking politely to the victim if they see him/her, doing community service at the school, selling of the youth’s CD’s, electronics or game devices to help pay any restitution owed, etc. This support includes at least a month or more of weekly regular face to face meetings and any other ongoing support that is necessary (e.g. school placement, counseling referrals, mentor match up, etc.)
5. **Success in Non-Criminal Behavior.** Part of every youth’s “plan” includes engaging in something they are interested in. Case management supports and helps to locate this activity, which can be arts, sports, job procurement, attend a prom, etc.
6. **Notification to Referral Agency.** Once the youth successfully completes his/her “plan” the DA is notified and charges are not filed. This allows the youth to honestly say they have never been convicted of a crime on any document they must complete. Thus opening up opportunities for them in employment and other areas.

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