

COSA News

Circles of Support and Accountability

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Building safer communities by providing circles of support and accountability for released sex offenders

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Circles

We're at 13 circles now. All three of our core members who were re-incarcerated for parole violations have been released and we are starting their circles up again. In one case we have a completely new set of volunteers. In the others we are adding new volunteers to some continuing volunteers. The good news continues to be that none of our core members have reoffended!

We have had conversations with several potential new core members over the past couple of months, but have not started any completely new circles recently. One development has been the opportunity to interview some offenders while they were still incarcerated. Two who are being released this week have expressed a desire to be part of COSA. We anticipate further conversations with them when they arrive in Fresno. We will also be requesting more referrals from parole in the near future.

As always, we are looking for new volunteers. This is a wonderful opportunity to do something tangible to make our community safe and to make a difference in someone's life. Contact Jordan or Clare Ann if you are interested.

COSA Funding

Our funding from a grant from the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation ended June 30. We were hopeful that after several months we would be awarded a Second Chance Act Mentoring Grant (federal). We recently learned that we did not receive that grant. What does this mean for COSA?

•We continue to look for additional funding through grants, donations, and possible contracts.

•COSA welcomes your donations! Several persons have begun making a regular donation to COSA on a monthly basis.

•Center for Peacemaking reserves and previous donations provide \$1500/month for COSA. This will only continue through June 2010.

•Jordan's Mennonite Voluntary Service stipend is covered by Mennonite Community Church. He divides his time between COSA and the church's food pantry and CARE project.

•Clare Ann is volunteering about two-thirds of her time to COSA at this point.

•We are committed to COSA continuing!

Coming Events

COSA Volunteer Training

November 13-14

Friday, Nov. 13 6:30-9:00 p.m.

Saturday, Nov. 14 8:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m.
Fresno Pacific University

COSA Volunteer Support Gathering

Friday, Nov. 20 3:00-4:30 p.m.

Center for Peacemaking and Conflict
Studies, Fresno Pacific University

COSA Holiday Gathering

"Thanksmas"

Saturday, Dec. 5 5:00-7:00 p.m.

Mennonite Community Church
Olive and Willow

Call Jordan at 453-3472 or Clare Ann at
453-3448 for more information on any of the
above events

COSA Evaluation

Dr. Bernadette Muscat has completed the evaluation of COSA. The process included interviews with core members, volunteers and parole officers. The findings of the study are:

▪ *COSA is effective at meeting the first 3 of its 4 primary goals*

1. *To enhance community safety*
2. *To reduce the risk of re-offense*
3. *To ease the Core Members' community transition process*
4. *To provide an open avenue for victims in their journey toward restoration and healing*

▪ *Not a single Core Member has re-offended during the study period*

▪ *All study participants see value in COSA and each have commented that COSA provides support to reduce at-risk behaviors while simultaneously helping Core Members to transition and re-integrate into the community.*

Dr. Muscat's recommendations coming out of the study are:

▪ *Earlier and better identification and recruitment of Core Members*

▪ *Better ability to identify and address volunteer and staff vicarious trauma*

▪ *More extensive training on conflict resolution and de-escalation techniques*

▪ *Increased COSA staffing and funding*

We are extremely grateful to Bernadette for the work (much of it uncompensated!) she has done on this evaluation. It is a real gift to COSA. We will utilize her findings and recommendations in our future planning.

COSA News

COSA BBQ: It's old news by now, but our 2nd annual COSA Anniversary Celebration and BBQ at the end of August was a great success. We celebrated two of our core members—Darcy and John—completing parole. Many of the core members present shared about the difference COSA makes in their lives. It was exciting to see the growth in our core members!

COSA Documentary: The documentary on COSA, *In Circles*, produced by Stanford University students Emile Bokaer and Alaa El Dajani, has received recognition in several competitions. Most recently it was a finalist in the Angeles Student Film Awards. This well-done

documentary has been well-received when we have shown it in workshop settings.

ATSA Conference: Clare Ann attended the annual research and training conference of the Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers (ATSA) in Dallas at the end of September. She presented a workshop on COSA and received much positive response. People working in sex offender treatment in various parts of the country as well as in other countries expressed interest in developing the COSA model.

Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Restorative Justice Gathering: Clare Ann also attended an MCC-sponsored gathering in Akron, PA. Participants included a variety of persons working in restorative justice. It was a good time of networking and hearing the stories of other organizations. While in Pennsylvania, Clare Ann met with a group in Lancaster that is working at developing a COSA program there. We are happy to be able to share what we have learned with others.

You are invited to donate to COSA

Make your gift through Fresno Pacific University (designated for the Center for Peacemaking/COSA)

Consider making COSA a part of your regular charitable giving

Checks can be sent to the:
Center for Peacemaking and Conflict Studies
1717 S. Chestnut Ave. #2202
Fresno, CA 93702.



Together we can make a difference!