



# COSA News

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

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## COSA Volunteer Training

Apr. 30-May 1  
Fri. Apr. 30  
6:30-9:00 p.m.  
Sat., May 1  
8:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m.  
Fresno Pacific University

## COSA Volunteer Support Gathering

Fri., May 7  
7:00-10:00 p.m.  
Mennonite Community Church  
Olive & Willow, Fresno  
Showing and discussion of  
*The Woodsman*

## In this issue . . .

- *Circle updates*
- *COSA Birthday Party*
- *COSA Volunteer Support Gathering*
- *COSA on the air*
- *Funding update*

## Circles

Our current count of circles is still 16. We recently closed one circle which was not functioning effectively. Then we began a new circle with the same volunteers from the circle which had closed. The core member in the new circle is a man we interviewed when we visited Avenal State Prison last summer. We still hope to develop a pre-release intake process and this is a good example of how it can work.

An interesting dynamic we have been working with recently is the transition when core members are released from parole. Some put the same restrictions on themselves that they had when they were on parole. Others struggle a bit as they try to figure out how to live with the new freedom they have. We are seeing how COSA is just as important—if not more so in some cases—after parole. Clare Ann recently had a conversation with a core member who was extremely frustrated with someone he felt was harassing him. The core member was thinking about how could respond. Clare Ann reminded him not to do something “stupid.” He said, “I know. That’s why I’m calling you. The people in my circle are the only people I have to talk to.”

“The people in my circle are the only people I can talk to.”

We have not made progress on starting a circle in Bakersfield. Too many things call for our attention right here. Meanwhile we have had another request to work with a man who was released from Coalinga State Hospital and is living in Upland. We hope to get something going in both Bakersfield and Upland soon.

## News and activities

### Birthday Party for COSA

A group of COSA friends gathered on February 19 to celebrate COSA’s third birthday.



Birthday greetings and appreciation for COSA were shared by core member Gary Briggs, volunteer Tucker Russell, and parole agent Patrick Hutcheson. COSA Advisory Board member Mari Henson made the event festive with balloons, banners, and bright tablecloths. Cash birthday gifts for COSA totaled \$495. Thank you to everyone who made the birthday party a fun event and a success! It was a good beginning to fundraising—but we

have a long way to go!



### Circles of Support and Accountability

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## Volunteer Support Gathering

COSA held a volunteer support meeting at the end of March. These meetings were put in place to provide support to volunteers as tough issues are brought up and faced in circles every week. Volunteers are able to voice their opinions on different issues and give insight to fill in pieces they may feel COSA is missing. Circles can become emotionally draining at times. Many volunteers have experienced this and need a safe place to release these feelings. Since COSA is still a new program in Fresno, receiving input from volunteers has proved very useful.

The most recent meeting was quite small, but very effective. Issues discussed include: What happens after core members are off parole? How does poverty affect core members and volunteers? Are core members taking responsibility for offenses and their actions in everyday life? Is circle attendance becoming an issue? The group at this meeting came up with a checklist for core members and volunteers that COSA will look at putting together including some of these issues.

We hope volunteers will keep attending these meetings as we find it helpful for both the volunteers and COSA staff. They are taking place bi-monthly. One month is a debriefing meeting where volunteers discuss issues they feel are important and the next meeting is an informational meeting. The next meeting will be an informational forum held on Friday, May 7th from 7-10 p.m. We will be showing the film, "The Woodsman" (starring Kevin Bacon) with discussion afterward. We hope to see many volunteers there!

## COSA on the Air

- **PBS** You can still see the PBS story on sex offenders and COSA if you missed it when it was broadcast at the end of January. It is on the PBS website. Here's the link: <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/episodes/january-29-2010/ministering-to-sex-offenders/5591/>
- **KYNO** Clare Ann and core member John were guests on the Alan Autry Show on March 24. The conversation was a reminder of how much education there is to be done on sex offenders and what it takes to keep the community safe. A podcast of the program can be heard on: <http://www.1300kyno.com/index.php?c=28>

## Funding

### Second Chance Act Mentoring Grant

Much of the last month was spend writing an application for a Second Chance Act grant. We applied for this grant last year and did not receive funding. We made some changes in the application this year and hope we will be successful. Funding under this program would begin October 1. In the meantime, we continue our fundraising efforts. The reserve funds available from the Center for Peacemaking and Conflict Studies will be depleted by the end of June. Even if we get a grant, we realize that we need to establish a reserve for times like this.

We are still working to reach the \$18,000 level by June. You can help by making a tax-deductible donation. Checks should be made out to the Center for Peacemaking and Conflict Studies and sent to the Center at 1717 S. Chestnut Ave. #2202, Fresno, CA 93702.

Consider making a monthly donation. If each volunteer gave \$10 per month for a year, we would receive over \$4000!