



# COSA News

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

JULY, 2010

VOLUME 4, NUMBER 4

## COSA Volunteer Training

August 20-21

Fri., Aug. 20

6:30-9:00 p.m.

Sat., Aug. 21

8:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

Fresno Pacific University

October 1-2

Fri., Oct. 1

6:30-9:00 p.m.

Sat., Oct. 2

8:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

Fresno Pacific University

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*Circle updates*

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*Getting the word out about COSA and sex offenders*

*Funding update*

## Circles

This is a transition time for some of our circles. One new circle has started in the last couple months. We have ten circles meeting regularly—some weekly, some bi-weekly, and one monthly. Several other Circles do not meet regularly, but volunteers stay in touch with the Core Member. It is clear that the relationships established are important. One thing we keep hearing over and over again from Core Members is that COSA is the only place where Core Members feel safe enough to be themselves. One Core Member said recently, “This is the only place I can really be me and say what I’m feeling. What’s going on with me.” Another Core Member reported a conversation with a potential Core Member. He told him: “You may not think you need COSA but you do. I didn’t think I needed it at first either. But I’ve realized I have stuff to work on. Just because God has forgiven me doesn’t mean I don’t have to look inside and deal with my own issues.”

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We now have volunteer facilitators in many of our circles. It looks like the system is going to work well. It is great to see volunteers taking more responsibility for the Circles. COSA will not have a Mennonite Voluntary Service worker this coming year, so it is important for others to help with various tasks. This frees Clare Ann to work on some big picture issues to help sustain and expand COSA.

## News and activities

### Staff Transition

July 12 was **Jordan Zickafoose’s** last day with COSA. He is spending a month with family and friends in Ohio and will return in August to enter the master’s program in Marriage and Family Therapy at California State University, Fresno. We will miss Jordan. He has made a valuable contribution to COSA and its development in Fresno. COSA volunteers, core members and friends gathered to say good-bye to Jordan on June 19. Even though we have said good-bye to Jordan, we expect to see him hanging out at COSA events and occasionally visiting a circle.





### Circles of Support and Accountability

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## COSA Expansion

The inquiries for help in getting circles started in other locations continue to come in. Clare Ann met with a group from a congregation in Upland to tell them about COSA. She has also been in conversation with persons from the Solvang/Ventura/Oxnard area. There is a possibility of two circles starting there. It has become clear that we need to prepare materials to help people who want to start one circle as well as materials for groups that want to start a larger COSA program. Clare Ann will be working on these materials in the coming weeks.

## Getting the Word Out about COSA and Sex Offenders

**Casandra Lindell**, MFT, a therapist who works with sex offenders and helps train COSA volunteers was a guest on the *Bill McEwen Show* on KYNO 940 on June 14. She did an excellent job of presenting information which accurately reflects issues regarding sexual offending. We were pleased that Casandra was able to do this.

*Christianity Today* is preparing an issue which will include a focus on congregations working with sex offenders. This topic is timely as sex offenders are seeking spiritual support in their recovery process. A story about COSA in Fresno will be included in this issue which is scheduled to be mailed around August 19.

## Sex Offender Legislation – Chelsea’s Law

Following the abduction and murder of Chelsea King by a convicted sex offender in San Diego this past February, a bill named “Chelsea’s Law” (AB1844) began its journey in the California State Legislature. As it has been processed with the input of various groups it has been shaped by some of the suggestions of the California Sex Offender Management Board and others who work with sex offenders. It now includes provisions that will actually help in the management and treatment of sex offenders. An email from a member of the CA Sex Offender Management Board on July 12 indicated that the bill *“has recently passed through a major legislative committee and appears likely to be passed and signed. This bill would create a system of mandatory specialized treatment for ALL sex offenders on State Parole and County Probation. The treatment would be in the context of the Containment Model. The treatment and polygraph testing would be a funded state mandate. The state and the counties would contract with qualified providers and pay for the services.”* This is good news!

## Funding

We are still waiting to hear whether our Second Chance Act Mentoring Grant application will be successful. In the meantime we continue to invite donations to COSA and explore other funding options. Clare Ann is officially working ten hours per week at this point and donating the rest of her time. Our funds to provide this stipend will be depleted by October. If grant funding does not come through, we will have to decide how we continue. \$1500 per month is needed for Clare Ann’s stipend and for other expenses. We continue to be committed to establishing COSA as a sustainable organization. It is ironic that we struggle with funding while at the same time we receive so much attention recognizing COSA as an effective way to work with sex offenders and create a safer community. We appreciate the gifts we have received to help with this effort.

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. Your contribution can make a difference!