



COSA News

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

JANUARY 2010

VOLUME 4, NUMBER 1

Birthday Party for COSA

February 19

4:00-6:00 p.m.

Mennonite Community Church

Olive & Willow

Stop by after work--

•celebrate three years of COSA with COSA friends

•enjoy some birthday cake

•bring a birthday gift to support the ongoing work of COSA

Mark your calendar

Happy New Year!

We begin 2010 with a new look for our newsletter. The new look goes along with some changes in COSA. As we near the 3rd anniversary of the beginning of COSA in February, 2007, we experience changes that come with growth and development.

COSA staff is reevaluating use of time. We have too many circles for staff to be involved in each circle! In some circles volunteers will be providing leadership so that Jordan and Clare Ann can give attention to other areas.

Funding continues to be an issue. We will give increased attention to funding challenges in the months ahead.

Circles

We start out 2010 with a record number of active circles—16. We have started some new circles. Circles of core members who had parole violations and have now been released have re-started. New members have been added to existing circles which had lost members over the past months. While there are still some adjustments to be made, we have a strong group of circles at this point. It is exciting to see the enthusiasm of new core members and new volunteers.

Recently a core member called Clare Ann. "I just wanted to tell you that what you're doing is really important." This echoes what we hear from many core members. COSA plays a crucial role in their lives. Many core members, especially with the economy in the shape it's in, find themselves frequently discouraged. COSA's support at those times helps them stay away from old behaviors that could lead to reoffending.

One core member who had been back to prison on a parole violation told a new core member: "COSA can help you. That's why I was able to stay out of prison as long as I was. When I got discouraged and pulled back from COSA, I picked up a violation. Now I know how much I need COSA."

"Now I know how much I need COSA!"

We are making contacts to start a circle in Bakersfield. A new core member was transferred to Bakersfield by parole the day his circle was to have its first meeting. He knows no one in Bakersfield and has no support network there. Let us know if you know of anyone in the Bakersfield area who might be interested in being part of a COSA circle.

News and activities

California Sex Offender Management Board

Clare Ann, Jordan, and Alicia Hinton, a friend of COSA, attended the November meeting of the California Sex Offender Management Board in Sacramento. They gave a presentation on COSA which was well-received. This was a great opportunity to get the word out about COSA and could help us in obtaining funding in the future.

COSA Volunteer Training

March 5-6
Fri. Mar. 5
6:30-9:00 p.m.
Sat., Mar 6
8:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m.
Fresno Pacific University

Next training:
Apr. 30-May 1

COSA Volunteer Support Gatherings

Fri., Mar. 19
5:30-7:00 p.m.
Fresno Pacific University

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

Circles of Support and Accountability

Center for Peacemaking and Conflict Studies,
Fresno Pacific University

1717 S. Chestnut Ave.
Fresno, CA 93702

559-453-3448

cosa@fresno.edu

peace.fresno.edu/cosa

Clare Ann Ruth-Heffelbower
Program Director

Jordan Zickafoose
Program Assistant

Thanksmas

The 2nd annual COSA "Thanksmas" celebration was held December 5. We had the best attendance yet at a COSA gathering—around 40 people. As always, it was a good time of sharing and fellowship.



PBS



Many of you are aware that a crew from PBS in Los Angeles was here December 4-5 shooting a story on sex offenders and COSA. The story is completed and addresses wider public policy issues around sex offenders and the role COSA plays in creating a safe community as it assists sex offenders with their transition to the community. The story was originally scheduled to be aired at the end of January. The Haiti earthquake, however, changed schedules. We will let you know when we have the details of when it will be broadcast.

Funding

The biggest challenge facing COSA at present is funding. While we continue to look for grant possibilities, it is obvious that we need to develop our own funding base. We are thankful for some individuals who have made gifts to COSA. Plans are underway to contact individuals and organizations to invite support for COSA. A Birthday Party for COSA is planned for February 19 as an opportunity for friends to celebrate the work of COSA and make a gift in support of COSA. Plan to attend!

We have identified three levels of funding goals—

- \$95,000/year would allow us to operate at the same level as when we were grant-funded. This includes funds to cover FPU support, Center for Peacemaking personnel, salary for the COSA Director and a Mennonite Voluntary Service worker, participation in continuing education and conferences.
- \$30,000/year would provide a \$1000/month stipend for the COSA Director, \$1000/month for a Mennonite Voluntary Service worker, \$500/month for expenses
- \$18,000/year would cover the monthly stipend for the COSA Director and \$500/month for expenses.

Our first goal is 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!

