



Talking Circles

WCCC
Washington County Community Circles

"Repairing harm to victims, holding clients accountable and building a better community."

www.peacemakingcircles.org
Contact@peacemakingcircles.org

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Enjoying the Change of Season



Spring is breathing new life into WCCC. We are finalizing our Strategic Initiatives for 2015, and I would like to share some of the Initiatives with you.

Creating a Circle Keeper Manual

Our Circle Keepers are at the center of our organization's work. Circle Keepers are instrumental in both the Circle operations as well as WCCC's operations. We ask a lot of our keepers, and this year we're focused on documenting the process that most of our keepers have memorized for keeping circles for years! We're committed to documenting and reviewing the process used to identify ways we can improve and ways to support Circle Keepers in the important work they do for our organization.

Expanding Our Outreach Efforts

As you will see in this newsletter, WCCC is active in the community and with our partners. We need volunteers and leaders to support this work. This year we are committed to recruiting more volunteers and Circle Keepers to support our long-term sustainability. If you are a volunteer and have thought about becoming a Circle Keeper, contact us and we can talk about what the role entails. Also, if you are not currently a volunteer, but are considering volunteering, let's talk! I am confident that we can find a good volunteer opportunity for you either in Circles or with WCCC's board. We are also always looking to strengthen our partnerships with other organizations and government entities. As you will see below, already in 2015 we have participated in several events and educational events with our partners. We look to expand this in the coming year.

Strengthening Our Infrastructure

While it isn't the most exciting initiative, strengthening our organization's infrastructure is essential to establishing and maintaining stability and sustainability. With the help of key volunteers in administrative and information technology solutions, we are building a strong, secure, and organized infrastructure for our client, volunteer, and stakeholder data needs, preparing us for an evaluation of WCCC's effectiveness expected for completion by the end of 2015.

As you can see, we have been inspired this spring to not only keep our organization operating, but to see it bloom and flourish. [Join us in our efforts!](#)

Katie Schurrer
 Chair of the Board



Upcoming Events

- April 25
 - Cottage Grove Annual Spring Business Showcase Booth Participation
 - Woodbury Community Expo Booth Participation
- May 3
 - Gerten's Fundraising Spring Flower Sale Pick-up at King Of Kings Lutheran Church
- May 15 & 16
 - 2-day Circle Training for New Volunteers

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

WCCC values their volunteers so much. We wouldn't exist without them! Our volunteers also help in one of WCCC's goals of "Building a Better Community." We want to spotlight our volunteers to show how kind, generous and meaningful their work is.

Continuing our spotlight, we would like to introduce a longtime volunteer, Peggy King.



Peggy has been volunteering in the Woodbury community since 2006! She has been a part of WCCC Woodbury Community since its inception. She heard of WCCC through an ad in the Woodbury Bulletin. She explains, "As soon as I started volunteering with WCCC, I knew that this was a fit. To be able to be part of building a better community and also have the opportunity to volunteer with such dynamic individuals through WCCC at the same time, has truly been a win-win for me!"

When Peggy isn't dedicating her time to WCCC, she enjoys spending time with her family. She and her husband, Greg and her two children have lived in Woodbury since 1987. She also enjoys reading, gardening and exploring local parks and trails with her dog, Maggie. When summertime rolls around you can find Peggy spending as much time as possible at her cabin, which is located on a very peaceful river.

We asked Peggy what she has learned through her many years of volunteering. Her thoughtful response reflects the true spirit of why WCCC exists. Peggy explained, "I truly feel that I have learned something from every single person that I have had the honor of working with over the years. This process continually reminds me that the ability to truly listen to someone is a positive and profound tool and that everyone has a unique story to share with us. Each individual benefits from being able to put their thoughts into words in a supportive environment."

Thank you for your many years of service to WCCC. Your wisdom and humility is truly appreciated.

If you're interested in learning more about volunteering for WCCC, please email us at: contact@peacemakingcircles.org

Volunteer Opportunities are always available through WCCC.

For more information or to learn how you can join a Circle, please contact us at contact@peacemakingcircles.org





Community Involvement

We frequently talk about building community in our Circles among our volunteers, clients, and participants. However, WCCC also engages the community through educating, fundraising, and building relationships.

Education

In March and April, WCCC presented to officers in the Woodbury Police Department to educate officers about who we are, what we do, and discuss how we can work together to better serve Woodbury residents. We provided officers with an overview of the informal processes used in Circles and also reviewed the formal process used to refer cases to WCCC from the court system. We also provided information on past cases, demonstrating both success and challenges. We discussed ideas for improving communication to and from WCCC and the Police Department, talked about how to build a better partnership, and – perhaps most importantly – got to introduce ourselves to each other. We look forward to continuing to build our relationship with the police officers individual, and the Woodbury Police Department as an organization. A special thanks goes out to Chief Lee Vague and Kim Richardson and Kim Peterson for inviting us in and helping coordinate our four sessions.

If you are interested in learning more about restorative justice, Sentencing Circles, or WCCC, we would be happy to come speak to your organization. [Email us](#) to set something up.

Fundraising

As many of you know, we conducted our Sixth Annual Gertens Fundraiser this spring. Flowers will be delivered on May 3, in time for Mother's Day on the 10th. We are pleased to announce we raised over \$700 this year! We are incredibly humbled by the support of our community, friends, family, and partners. This fundraiser will fully fund our Circle-completion celebrations with our clients. These celebrations bring together our clients, volunteers, victims (if they choose to attend), and the clients' support people to celebrate the progress and behavior change they've found while attending Circle and provide an opportunity for all Circle participants to reflect on our client's time in Circle.

We also take donations year-round, so if you would like to support WCCC, please [contact us](#) or donate through the [GiveMN website](#).

Building Relationships

WCCC also regularly partners with community organizations and on initiatives supporting restorative justice and our partners. Since the beginning of 2015, we have attended the [Woodbury Citizen's Academy](#) to share our story and engage potential volunteers, participated as a community partner for [Know the Truth Forums](#) in Washington County, met with Minnesota Restorative Services Coalition ([MRSC](#)) staff, and met at local Stillwater churches to discuss restorative justice, circles, and WCCC.

We are always looking to build partnerships in the community. [Contact us](#) if you are interested in partnering!

Partners in (Repairing the harm of) Crime

Recently, an enthusiast of Restorative Justice and a supporter of WCCC, Joann Ward, DFL, District: 53A, House Representative, released a Legislative Update on April 13, 2015 from The Minnesota House of Representatives.

It details information about Restorative Justice being an option to Washington County Residents. It reads:



Dear friends,

Sentencing Circles

There are a number of forms of restorative justice available to residents of Washington County, most of which are focused on juvenile offenders. There is a lesser known option available to offenders and victims of all ages called Sentencing Circles. Sentencing Circles is practiced by Washington County Community Circles, Inc., an all-volunteer non-profit currently active in Woodbury, Stillwater and Cottage Grove. WCCC, Inc. partners with the traditional justice system (judges, prosecutors, defense attorneys, victim advocates) to offer a restorative alternative to the often punitive justice system for appropriate criminal cases. Cases are referred to WCCC Inc. by the courts after all parties to the case, including the offender and, most importantly, the victim, agree that the offender wishes to repair the harm caused by the offense and make positive behavioral changes in their life.

If the Community Circle decides to accept the case referral, trained community volunteers meet with the offender (and the victim if they wish to be involved in the process) around twice a month for a period of 2-4 months to gain knowledge of the situation that led to the offense and develop a sentencing compact designed to assist the offender with repairing the harm caused by the incident and in making positive behavioral changes. The sentence is then presented for the court's approval. After the approval is granted by the court the offender is placed on probation to the Circle for a period of 12 to 24 months. During this time, the Circle meets with the offender on a monthly basis and assists as necessary with completion of the obligations imposed by the sentence. If the offender cannot fulfill the sentencing obligations the case will be returned to the court. In the large majority of Sentencing Circle cases in Washington County the offender is able to successfully complete the Circle obligations. This outcome is reported to court and results in no conviction for the offense.

Sentencing Circles have been practiced in Washington County since 1998 in Stillwater and Cottage Grove and 2006 in Woodbury. During this time over 100 cases have been handled. In 2014, WCCC Inc. was involved with 12 active cases requiring over 2000 volunteer hours. At the end of the year there were 56 active volunteers in the organization. New volunteers are always welcome. More information is available on the WCCC, Inc. website at <http://www.peacemakingcircles.org> or by calling Bob Storlie at 651-735-9344.

For a direct link to the Legislative Update, please click: www.house.leg.state.mn.us

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As long as we are persistent in our pursuit of our deepest destiny, we will continue to grow. We cannot choose the day or time when we will fully bloom. It happens in its own time. ~Denis Waitley, Author~

Send a check...



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Or Contribute via
www.givemn.org

