

PENNSYLVANIA Juvenile Justice

Victim
Restoration Edition

Fall
2004

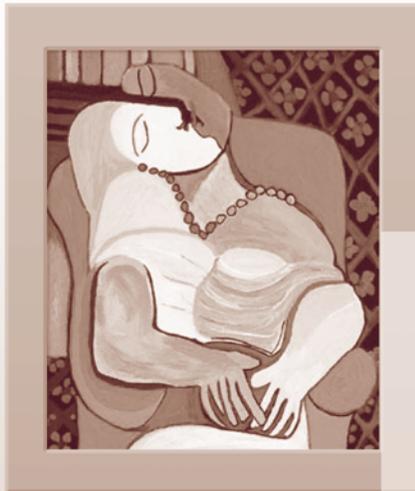


The Art of Recovery

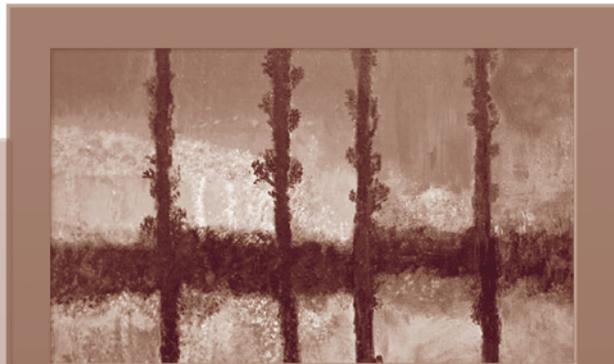
by Ann Christian, VisionQuest

The paintings pictured here are the works of residents in VisionQuest's Madalyn Program for young women. Each of the adolescent artists had in common, a history of trauma and abuse, a fear of failure, a low level of self-worth, difficulty concentrating, a tendency to quit, a resistance toward trying something new, and very little exposure to the arts. This therapeutic program is designed to assist them in the recovery process from the trauma they experienced in their lives. Keyanna chose "Interior with Violin Case," by Henri Matisse, because the colors were cheerful and the setting of the room was peaceful. "The Dream," by Pablo Picasso, represented Shawna's inner

confusion and turmoil, and feelings of being torn apart from family members. Melissa really connected with "Maternity," by Pablo Picasso, because she was the young mother of an 18-month-old son. "The Poplars," by Claude Monet, was Kayla's favorite. She liked the reflection of the trees in the water and the pleasant color scheme. It took her over four months to complete the painting because she became frustrated and quit many times. Yet she eventually succeeded. Her work appears below. ✦



Reproduction Painting
of Pablo Picasso's
The Dream, circa 1932
Youth artist: Shawna, age 15



Reproduction Painting
of Claude Monet's
The Poplars, circa, 1891
Youth artist: Kayla, age 15



Reproduction Painting
of Henri Matisse's
Interior with Violin Case, circa 1918
Youth artist: Keyanna, age 15



Reproduction Painting
of Pablo Picasso's
Maternity, circa 1901
Youth artist: Melissa, age 18

Chester County Juvenile Court Victim/Witness Project: Collaboration For The Community

submitted by The Chester County Juvenile Probation Office
and The Crime Victims' Center of Chester County, Inc.

"Effective January 2, 1996, the Chester County Juvenile Court Victim/Witness Project, through The Crime Victims' Center of Chester County, Inc., will begin their official duties in and for the Juvenile Court of Chester County."

With this announcement in an interoffice memo, a partnership to address victims' needs in Chester County was initiated. Beginning in January 1996, every referral received by a Juvenile Probation Officer has also been forwarded to a Victim/Witness Advocate located in the Chester County Juvenile Probation Office. This advocate, who is an employee of The Crime Victims' Center of Chester County, Inc. (CVC), began contacting victims regarding court hearings, mailing victim claim forms, accompanying victims to court, and, most importantly, being an on-site advocate for the victims of juvenile crime. Up to that time, some of these important responsibilities had not been fully addressed for these victims. The project has now expanded to include two full-time victim advocates who continue to be located in the Juvenile Probation Office. They provide instant access for, and assistance, to the JPO staff concerning important victim-related information, such as restitution and victim input regarding disposition decisions, as well as providing direct service to victims, including compensation assistance and counseling.

The Crime Victims' Center of Chester County, Inc., a private, nonprofit comprehensive victim service center, began in 1973 as the Rape Crisis Council to provide services to victims of sexual assault. In 1976, the center expanded its services to reach victims of other types of crimes, such as assault, homicide, robbery, stalking, etc. The center currently provides services to all victims of crime

and their families for as long as those services are needed. All services are free and confidential.

While the close relationship between JPO and CVC was initiated in 1993, since 1996, under the Victims of Juvenile Offenders Act, this partnership has continued to grow and prosper, much to the benefit of those who have been victimized by juvenile offenders. CVC has developed a pamphlet which explains the Juvenile Court process, the Bill of Rights for Victims of Juvenile Offenders, terminology, and restitution, and provides important contact phone numbers. Victims are provided with an area in the Juvenile Probation Office where they can wait for their hearings, separate from the areas where defendants wait, thus avoiding contact between victims and defendants or their families. Advocates provide continuous input into the juvenile justice system and to JPO staff via presentations at JPO staff meetings and workshops on victims' issues throughout the year, and are active members of the Chester County Juvenile Justices Advisory Committee. This committee is composed of Judges, Masters, District Justices, members of the educational community, police, related social services agencies and providers, and County, private, and community-based agencies.

Additionally, Victim Advocates sit on numerous subcommittees within JPO to address topics such as restitution, strategic planning, and victim awareness. Advocates have become members of the JPO family to such an extent that they participate in the annual JPO Holiday Door-decorating Contest and the JPO October Pumpkin-carving Contest.

In 2003, a Victim Advocate and a JPO Community Service Program

From left to right:
Carrie Avery, the Juvenile Court Victim/Witness Coordinator,
Carrie Webster, the Juvenile Court Victim/Witness Advocate,
Diana Munson, JPO Casework Supervisor and
liaison to the Juvenile Court Victim/Witness Project,
Peggy Gusz, Executive Director of the Crime Victims' Center of
Chester County, Inc.



caseworker attended a Train-the-Trainers workshop for the Victim/Community Awareness Curriculum developed for Pennsylvania by Valerie Bender. Twice a month, JPO and CVC Victim/Witness Project staff present the Impact of Crime program, which uses this Victim/Community Awareness curriculum to afford juvenile offenders the opportunity to gain insight into the effects of their behaviors on victims and the community. It provides a forum for these juveniles to understand the real results of their actions, and to understand that many people are affected by their behavior. CVC Victim Advocates are integral components of this program, and, in fact, will soon be administering the program.

Victim advocates are included on the teams that travel throughout the community to speak with schools, police departments, and other community organizations to educate shareholders about the juvenile justice system.

CVC provides a vital service to the victims of juvenile crime in Chester County every day. This project preceded the adoption in 2000 of PA Act 86, "The Bill of Rights" for Victims of Juvenile Offenders. These two agencies will continue to keep victims rights as a primary focus, and, as new programs become available, utilize them for the benefit of the citizens of Chester County. ✦

Victim/Community Awareness: An Orientation for Juveniles – The Second Generation

by Valerie Bender, National Center for Juvenile Justice

In September of 1999 the first edition of *Victim/Community Awareness: An Orientation for Juveniles*, was published under a grant from the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency. The goals of the curriculum were simple—awaken juvenile offenders to the fact that crime harms individuals and communities, teach offenders precisely how their victims and communities were impacted by crimes, and help youthful offenders recognize that they have the ability to repair the harm to some degree. While holding fast to those goals, a newly formatted edition of the curriculum is now available. All core components of the curriculum remain the same. The new edition is just more facilitator-friendly.

The curriculum is divided into three parts that build upon each other for maximum effect. The first phase starts with the basics of balanced and restorative justice. The intent is not to make young people experts on the subject. It is simply to let them know that, by law, professionals in the field must pay attention to the victim and community as well as to the offender.



Probation Officers Manny Gomez and Vince Pioli instructing victim awareness classes.

The second phase lets the participants explore various feelings of victims through a role-playing exercise. In a non-threatening atmosphere, young people learn of the myriad of emotions victims may experience and how each of those emotions may be expressed through a variety of behaviors.

Equipped with that knowledge, participants are ready to enter the last phase of the curriculum—exploring the actual harm each of them caused to individuals and communities. Prompted by the facilitator, youngsters discover the full impact of their crimes. During this phase offenders recognize the human Name, Face and Heart that accompanies victimization.

Once offenders demonstrate an understanding of the impact of crimes they committed, they are ready to begin the final exercise—writing an apology. Offenders learn the basics of what makes an appropriate apology and then are given the opportunity to write one. Although **only given to victims upon their request**, written apologies are often a reliable indication of what the young person has learned.

Across the Commonwealth, many probation offices are using *Victim/Community Awareness: An Orientation for Juveniles*. While the local probation office sets policy regarding facilitators, referrals, eligibility, time and place of sessions, the curriculum itself contains the necessary materials and helpful hints for running classes. ♣

For further information, please contact Susan Blackburn at the Center for Juvenile Justice Training and Research, at 717-477-1411 or sblackburn@state.pa.us



Mission of the Juvenile Justice System

*"Juvenile Justice:
Community Protection,
Victim Restoration,
Youth Redemption."*

Community Protection refers to the right of all Pennsylvania citizens to be and feel safe from crime.

Victim Restoration emphasizes that, in Pennsylvania, a juvenile who commits a crime harms the victim of the crime and the community, and thereby incurs an obligation to repair that harm to the greatest extent possible.

Youth Redemption embodies the belief that juvenile offenders in Pennsylvania have strengths, are capable of change, can earn redemption, and can become responsible and productive members of their community.

Furthermore, all of the services designed and implemented to achieve this mission and all hearings and decisions under the Juvenile Act — indeed all aspects of the juvenile justice system — must be provided in a fair and unbiased manner. The United States and Pennsylvania Constitutions guarantee rights and privileges to all citizens, regardless of race, color, creed, gender, national origin or handicap.

So Why Circles?

by Don Haldeman, Delaware County Juvenile Probation Department

The following is not so much an article on a restorative justice program as it is a commentary on a way of transformation. What are circles and what can they transform, you ask?

Let me give you some background. First, in March, 2002, the Juvenile Court Judges Commission, through the Center for Juvenile Justice Training and Research, had the vision and courage to bring Kay Pranis (Minnesota Department of Corrections) in for a four-day up-close-and-personal training on peacemaking circles. Twenty-three people were fortunate to be there, including three individuals from my county (Delaware). I found those four days to be life-altering because they taught me a way to open hearts with a dialogue process long employed by First Nation peoples for generations. When we came home we immediately began our own support group, with meetings held around one issue... how do we bring this process to Delaware County? We began looking for ways to conduct peacemaking circles and thinking of how we could train others. Two years later, we have held five peacemaking circle dialogue trainings for probation officers, teachers, mediators and lawyers, and we have each found different ways to employ circles.

Now is a good time to look at what circles are and how they can transform. Think for a second, if you will, of all the people you see on a daily basis in the halls of justice who are in pain. We know crime victims (and their loved ones) are frequently hurting, but offenders (and their loved ones) can be hurting as well. We have also known for some time that folks in the trenches (police, probation officers,

corrections officers, etc.) can also be emotional trainwrecks. Now what if I told you it didn't have to be that way? What if I told you there was a dialogue process that would offer people who have suffered harm, a way to release some of the demons they have had to struggle with? Sound impossible? Too good to be true?

Peacemaking circles can be used for any number of applications. I have described situations where healing circles might be employed, but circles can be used for sentencing purposes (community sentencing circles), in the classroom (for academic and conflict resolution purposes), in the workplace (to resolve disputes, to build consensus, or to help employees deal with trauma), and in communities (to allow residents to problem solve, come to consensus and help reintegrate offenders). Circles can be used almost anywhere there is conflict or trauma.

What is it about circles that makes them a useful tool for crime victims and others who have been harmed? Circle Keepers are specifically trained to create a safe space for dialogue. The shape of the circle naturally lends itself to that process, but keepers must bring folks into circle through rituals and bonding exercises that help everyone in circle find common ground and slowly open their hearts. A great deal of effort goes into explaining issues of respect and confidentiality and preparing participants to handle issues that arise. Whether or not you are bringing victims and offenders together for direct dialogue, or bringing a group of victims together for healing purposes, the results can literally be transforming.

In our consent decree unit, Jacki Bishop employs circles for our victim awareness curriculum. First, no more than 15 offenders are brought together for a healing circle, where they talk about their own victimizations (most of us have them), the resulting emotions and the ways they are still impacted. After a break, they are brought back into circle to discuss their crimes and their victims, and process how their victims must have felt. These circles have had a major impact for many offenders and, as circle keepers, we rejoice in seeing the layers of resistance and denial peel away.

This year, as supervisor of our court's victim services unit, I hope to begin offering circle dialogues to many teenage victims of school assaults, many of whom are so traumatized that they are afraid to return to their schools.

Are circles a cure-all or a therapeutic replacement? Not at all, but circle keepers have been astonished at times to see how some victims are able to begin verbalizing their pain in a safe place, with friends who will support them in attendance.

In my other career as a graduate professor at Saint Joseph's University in Philadelphia, I facilitate six classes a year, four related to restorative justice, but all facilitated using wisdom circles. I have watched very high ranking members of law enforcement, courts and corrections rediscover their purpose and shed some of the cynicism which masked pain. While I have been trained in a number of dialogue processes, peacemaking circles are closest to my heart. ✨

If you are interested in peacemaking circle training, please email me at haldemand@co.delaware.pa.us

Giving Victims a Choice (Addressing the Harm)

by Jon Singer, Executive Director, Lancaster Area Victim Offender Reconciliation Program



You've heard it before. And, in some cases it is true. Victims are victimized twice – once by the perpetrator and again by the system. Because crimes are considered an action against the state and not the victim, the victim is asked to help prosecute the person who violated them. But, other than seeing the offender under adverse conditions (court), victims are, typically, unable to address their harm and talk about the life-altering experiences with the ones who violated them. Can that ever happen?

In some areas of the State, yes—where there are victim-offender mediation programs. By participating, victims are able to work toward closure, see the human side of the incident, have questions answered and tell about the experience as an aid to healing—all in an emotionally and physically safe setting. In turn, they are able to hear from the offender about his/her wanting to be accountable, learn the impact of his/her actions and make amends to the victim.

LAVORP (Lancaster Area Victim Offender Reconciliation Program) has been working with victims of juvenile crime since 1995. During that time over 1,500 incidents have been referred including about 2,500 victims. For various reasons not all victims avail themselves of the opportunity to meet face-to-face with those who violated them. For some, the incident happened too long ago by the time they are offered victim-offender mediation, or they consider the incident too insignificant, or are too busy to invest their time. For others, it is a most satisfying experience.

Notification of victimization is received from Juvenile Probation (or a Youth Aid Panel), a department that is very attuned to the Balanced and Restorative Justice concept of victim restoration, offender accountability (youth redemption) and community protection.

So as not to re-victimize a victim, the offender is contacted first by a volunteer

facilitator to explain the benefits of a restorative justice program. If the offender is willing to be accountable to his/her victim, the facilitator meets with the victim to learn of their needs and to discuss how the process to address their harm will work in meeting with the person who violated him/her. If the victim agrees, a conference is convened. Both parties are encouraged to have support people in attendance, not to defend positions, but rather to be a caring presence.

It is the facilitator's responsibility to insure that the meeting will be safe, physically and emotionally, for all parties and, therefore, (after introductions and checking that everyone is there voluntarily) opens the meeting with ground rules that everyone can agree to: no interruptions, respect for each person's time to speak, no shouting, hollering or swearing. Truth is the "order of the day."

Following the offender's recitation of the what, where, when, and how the incident happened, the victim is given a chance to ask questions to further the understanding of their violation. This is also an opportunity to express how they felt, then and now, and how they and others were affected. If apologies and forgiveness are to occur, they will happen during this phase of the meeting.

When all present have had their chance to speak, the meeting moves on to addressing the harm of the incident. It's often surprising how victims react when meeting the offenders. One might think that they would come in with chips on their shoulders, wanting to lambaste the offender for the harm he/she caused. To the contrary, they hear what the offender has to say and then express concern that the youth learns from the experience and becomes a productive citizen. The losses sustained by the victim are not totally forgotten, but frequently, financial restitution is not the focal point.

Addressing the harm can take several approaches. Some victims want nothing more than to see that the youth had the courage to show up and accept responsibility for his/her actions. Others will say that apologies (oral or written) are sufficient. And, even in lieu of financial restitution, some will accept community service directly for or on behalf of the victim.

The beauty of the program is that the victim gets to say what he/she needs to "make things right." And, just being able to tell about their experience to the one who caused it is, at times, sufficient.

Whatever is agreed to between the victim and offender is put into writing and signed off by those present. The Agreement is monitored by LAVORP to insure compliance. And, while not a perfect system, 90% of the time offenders fulfill their promises to victims.

In the end, is there victim satisfaction? Those who participate think so. They express a high degree of satisfaction (85%). Some comments follows:

"I would recommend LAVORP to any victim simply to get back what was taken from them quicker than the court system does."

"Thank you so much for the care and time that your organization and its exceptional volunteers put into this."

"Your volunteer did a great job bringing everyone together. I'm glad there's an organization like this to go to. Thanks." ♣

Crime Repair Crew

by David Archambault, Crime Repair Crew Coordinator

The Crime Repair Crew offers victims of crime in the city of Philadelphia free repair services for criminally caused property damage. Referrals are received from local agencies such as police districts, senior citizen agencies, and domestic violence programs. The Crime Repair Crew meets the competency development goal of Balanced and Restorative Justice by providing skill development in carpentry and basic household repairs for adolescent boys committed to the Mitchell Program at Saint Gabriel's Hall.

Select students are involved in an additional 8 to 12 hours of community service repairing crime victims' homes. Students become more empathetic to crime victims when they see the damage caused to the victim's home.

As the Crime Repair Coordinator, I am responsible for the administration of the Crime Repair Crew, including teaching students vocational education skills and responding to crime victims' needs in a timely fashion.

The students participate in an 8-week training program, including classroom and hands-on training. The training includes: safety skills, measuring, using and identifying hand tools, power tool safety, painting, window and lock repair, cutting wood safely, and hanging and repairing doors and door jambs.

The Crime Repair Crew has a large workshop which is completely stocked with all modern woodworking equipment for training, as well as a Crime Repair Van which is also fully stocked with hand and power tools so they can respond to any repair service in the field.

The Crime Repair Crew responds as quickly as possible to make needed repairs to victims' homes. Crime victims acknowledge that juvenile offenders can make a positive contribution and help their communities.



Through training, students are able to develop marketable employment skills.

The Crime Repair Crew's most common jobs are repairing broken windows, damaged entry doors and door jambs, replacing entry locks, and repairing screens.

The Crime Repair Crew made repairs to 18 homes in 2004. Some of the repairs include replacing two windows in a second-floor bedroom—the windows had been shot out by gunfire as the victim slept in bed. The victim was on disability and had no homeowner's insurance. She was referred by West-Southwest Victim Services. Both windows and screens were repaired and the victim was tremendously grateful to be able to go back into her bedroom. She wrote that she does not know what she would have done without the work done by the Crime Repair Crew. The students also learned from this repair. One student commented how dangerous the situation could have been if the victim had been standing near the window.

Another Crime Repair Crew job was referred by the 26th Police District. Police officers were responding to a burglar alarm at 1:00 a.m., but arrived to find a much more serious situation. Police said an intruder had shot the victim, then later turned the gun on himself. The shooter was the victim's ex-boyfriend. He had broken into the home, damaging both doors. One door

was repaired and one was replaced. The victim is in critical but stable condition. This job was a real learning experience for the students. The victim's mother called, saying, "thank God for the Crime Repair Crew."

While practicing carpentry, students are able to get feel for a career choice that may be an option for them. In addition, they learn social skills while interacting with the community and victims of crime.

This program is a win-win for everyone involved. Students learn a trade and become more empathetic to crime victims. Crime victims have their homes repaired at no cost to them. Victims also see teenagers in a better light, helping their community. ✦

Editors Note:

Articles for publication in the Pennsylvania Juvenile Justice Special Edition newsletter can be sent to:

Andrew J. DeAngelo
Deputy Chief Probation Officer
Lehigh County Juvenile Probation Dept.
455 W. Hamilton Street
Allentown, PA 18101

or email to

andrewdeangelo@lehighcounty.org