



COMMUNITY CONNECTION

Essex Community Justice Center's
Periodic E-Fanzine*

In this Edition:

ECJC Director Update
Page 01

Panel Updates
Page 02 - 03

Racial Equity Update
Page 04 - 05

Reading Corner
Page 06

Intern Intro & Training Updates
Page 07

Focusing on the Positive
Page 08

Other Program Updates
Page 09

ECJC Photo Album
Page 10

Staff & Program Info
Page 11

Please email mbourque@essex.org if you would like to submit content to be featured in the following edition!

ECJC Director Update

Hello ECJC volunteers and community partners!!

It is hard to believe that it is November already! Things have been very busy at the Essex Community Justice Center! As we approach this season of Giving Thanks we want to express our deepest appreciation and gratitude to all of our amazing volunteers at the Essex CJC. You are a wonderful community helping to create a world in which every human life is valued. Thank you for sharing yourselves, your skills and knowledge to help improve lives and build communities that are safe, expansive and resilient, and where the response to conflict and crime is restorative and healing, and reduces further harms. The amount of service provided by the Essex CJC in FY22 was remarkable and certainly highlight the robust programs our communities can offer through a strong network of volunteers. During FY22 1,077 volunteer hours resulted in: 186 restorative justice panels, 154 of which were referred in FY22, and 8 Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSAs). We are wishing you all the happiness of good friends, the joy of family, and the wonder of the holiday season in the months ahead.

E-fanzine [fan-zeen]

noun - a magazine, usually produced by amateurs, for fans of a particular group (in this case, OUR VOLUNTEERS!)

Please enjoy the rest of the e-fanzine: there's lots of wonderful content submitted by folks this month!

Essex Panels

An update from our Restorative Justice Specialist

Susanna Weller



Essex in FY22

In FY 22 (July 1, 2021 - June 30, 2023) the number of cases referred by the Essex PD continued an upward trend. We received one more case in FY 2022 than we did in FY 2021. The percentage of those cases that were States Attorney kick-backs was down compared to FY21. The type of case where referrals have increased the most was excessive speed. In fact, 20 of our 51 new referrals were traffic offenses (DLS, Excessive Speed, Negligent Operation, Operation without Owners Consent and Reckless Endangerment). There were fewer cases of petit larceny, retail theft, simple assault and unlawful mischief were referred to the CJC. In FY22 89% of responsible parties who started a restorative justice panel process the successfully completed their work. This is down from 94% in FY 21. Of 50 cases that closed in FY 2022, 15 (30%) of the cases were returned. This is an increase from last year. In six cases of those cases the responsible party chose not to participate prior to the initial panel meeting.

We also received referrals from other sources for incidents that took place in Essex, Essex Junction, Jericho and Underhill. 3 of those referrals were from the VT State Police, one was a school referral, and two from Burlington Probation and Parole, and one from the local Diversion program.

Most of the responsible parties referred in this period provided race and ethnicity information. The majority of responsible parties (69%) define themselves as white. For comparison, the populations of both Essex and Essex Junction are over 80% white. The average age of responsible parties went up slightly to 29.

The number of affected parties who participated in a restorative justice panel went up this year. The amount of restitution collected for victims also increased.

Essex in First Quarter FY23

In the first quarter of FY 23 (July - September 30) we have received 13 new case referrals where the incident took place in Essex Town, Essex Junction, Jericho or Underhill. Of those 13, 9 of the incidents took place in Essex Town. All of the cases referred were pre-trial, and most were referred to the CJC directly from Essex Police Department officers. The people referred as responsible parties range in age from 12 - 59. Seven of the incidents were property crimes, such as retail theft, larceny and vandalism. Four incidents were assaults or threats. One was driving related, and we received one case of drug possession. The majority of the responsible parties referred are white / Caucasian.

Of the 13 cases, 11 had listed Affected Parties. We did outreach to all listed affected parties, and a few have chosen to participate in panels.

One of the questions we grappled with this quarter is how to handle cases where there are multiple responsible parties in a single incident. One option is to see each responsible party in a separate panel meeting. The positive of this approach is that we get more time to work with each person and thoroughly explore the impact on all affected parties. The restorative justice panel agreements will be more individualized. However, each responsible party may tell a different story in an effort to minimize their own need to take accountability for their actions. And if an affected party wants to participate, they will need to attend more than one initial panel meeting. If we see all of the responsible parties in one panel meeting, they correct each-others stories and thus provide mutual accountability. When the responsible parties are youth, the parents / guardians often get a better understanding of the incident. The affected party gets to hear from everyone and attend only one meeting. One of the cons of seeing everyone together is that it is difficult to dedicate the needed time to connect with each responsible party. It can also be challenging to keep track of and address the dynamics in a larger group.

Colchester & Milton Panels

An update from our Restorative Justice Specialist

Michelle Teegarden



Colchester Update

Between April of 2022 and mid-October of 2022, we received 23 new Colchester-based cases, all of which were referred directly from law enforcement or from the State Attorney's Office prior to entering the court system. Since April we have not received any Restorative Probation cases referred from Probation and Parole. The cases varied and included crimes such as Petit Larceny, Unlawful Mischief, Possession of Marijuana, Simple Assault, Vandalism, Weapons Violation, Leaving the Scene of an Accident, and Retail Theft. The age of responsible parties ranged from 11 to 60 years old. Outreach to affected parties is always a priority for the CJC but victims do not always wish to respond or participate in the Restorative Justice process. Approximately 25% of the cases resulted in direct participation by affected parties in some form or another including attendance at RJ panels, submitting restitution needs, impact statements, and other requests. A small number of referrals did not participate or complete the panel process, but most responsible parties are either currently involved in restorative justice panels or have successfully completed the process. We have seen a slight uptick in school related referrals of youth (marijuana/vape pen possession and property damage) all of which have responded to our outreach and engaged in the RJ process with their parents/guardians.

Unlike many CJCs across the state, we have resumed holding almost all our panels in person at the Colchester Police Department and the CJC since late March, with some exceptions when accommodations for Zoom meetings are warranted. It has been wonderful being together again with our volunteers, and fingers crossed that we can continue to do so as we enter the winter season. The Essex CJC recently facilitated Restorative Justice Panel training with a delightful group of people of all ages from a variety of backgrounds and we're excited to welcome new volunteers to the ECJC team.

Milton Update

Between April of 2022 and mid-October of 2022, we received 15 new Milton-based cases, all of which were referred directly from law enforcement or from the State Attorney's Office prior to entering the court system. Since April we have not received any Restorative Probation cases referred from Probation and Parole. The most frequently referred crimes included Excessive Speeding followed by Trespassing/Attempted Larceny, and Unlawful Mischief, and one each of Retail Theft and Simple Assault. The age of responsible parties in Milton ranged from 13 to 40 years old. Five affected parties from the 15 Milton cases responded to our outreach but the smaller number reflects the high frequency of Excessive Speeding cases that do not involve victims. Most of the responsible parties whose victims did respond and/or participate resulted in successful completions.

Once we resumed conducting panels in person last March, we sought out an alternate gathering space in Milton. The Cornerstone Community Church graciously offered their large community room for our fourth Monday of the month panels. Many thanks to them for supporting our efforts! The Restorative Justice Panel training we just completed has yielded a few new Milton volunteers, so we're looking forward to welcoming a new face or two at our Milton panels

ECJC Update on Strengthening Racial Equity in Community Justice

From our Restorative Justice Specialist and Special Project Coordinator Karen Dolan

Overview

The Essex CJC continues a path to explore strategies to strengthen racial equity within our programs and in the community. With the reality that disparities exist in our criminal justice system, we are dedicated to actively attempting to remove barriers and creating programs that ensure success for all. Below are some of the recent efforts we are taking within our center and in the communities we serve:

Developing a Multilingual Liaison Program for Restorative Justice Panels

Our panels are seeing more diverse referrals and one strategy we are seeking to better meet the needs of panel participants is establishing a program to incorporate liaisons into the process. Multilingual and cultural liaisons create an important bridge between parties and allow for more meaningful discussion. We are currently meeting with [Essex Westford School District's Multilingual Liaison Program](#), [AALV](#) and [USCRI](#) to gather input, develop training and identify potential liaisons. Our goal is to create a full program that incorporates training for both current volunteers and incoming liaisons in order to ensure everyone is on the same page for program goals. Additionally we are in

Voices for Inclusion in Essex and Westford (VIEW)

The ECJC was a founding partner of this group that is now a full nonprofit organization. ECJC staff member, Karen Dolan, continues to serve on the board and regularly shared updates to the CJC. To follow the work and upcoming events check out VIEW's website.

Re-starting ECJC Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Volunteer group

Susanna is in the works to relaunch the volunteer group on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. In the past, this volunteer-led group, accessed space and staff support to bring volunteers together to discuss DEI topics, read related books or other related activities. This is a completely optional group and creates important space for volunteer connection and reflection.

Statewide Initiative to Increase Racial Justice, Equity and Inclusion in Vermont's Efforts to Promote Restorative Justice


In the summer of 2022, the Directors of the Essex and Burlington CJsCs (Jill Evans and Rachel Jolly) and the Orange County Restorative Justice Center (Jessie Schmidt) applied for (on behalf of all RJ Programs in VT) and were awarded funds through Senator Leahy's efforts, to promote Racial Justice, Equity & Inclusion across all of Vermont's RJ Programs.

This 2 year, \$433,000 grant allows the 24 state funded restorative justice organizations (Community Justice Centers, Court Diversions and BARJ Programs for youth) to pursue the following project outcomes:

Develop, deliver, and institutionalize professional development trainings to address personal and institutional racism, implicit bias, trauma, gender equity, and general inclusivity.

Conduct a statewide data collection process to improve racial justice and inclusion outcomes, including a needs assessment, the creation of standard metrics and collection tools, and the selection of, and agency-onboarding to, a new, shared data-management system, and

Support agencies and state partners to review and update policies and procedures with the guidance of antiracism experts.



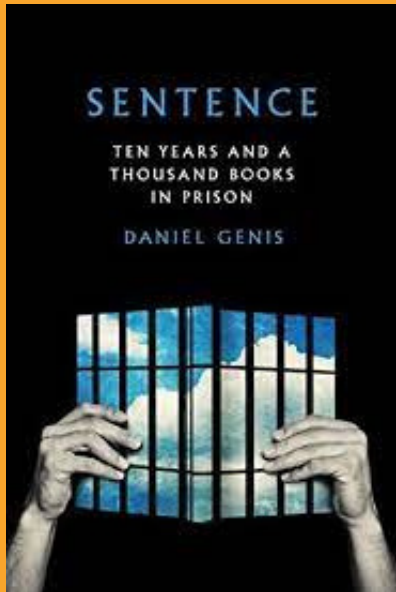
If we wish to truly transform the justice system, we need to actively push for greater systemic change and for restorative processes that address the root causes of crime as found in racism, sexism, and lack of educational and economic opportunity.

A Leadership Steering Committee is in the process of being formed that will include Jessie Schmidt, Jill Evans, Rachel Jolly and 3 additional RJ Program Directors to manage the initiative.

Reading Corner

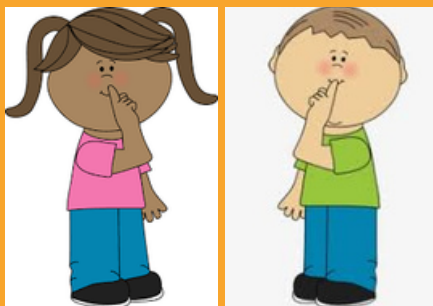
Book

Recommendation



Sentence: Ten Years and a Thousand Books in Prison is the detailed experience of prison as told by its author, Daniel Genis. Genis was incarcerated in the early 2000s for a handful of counts of armed robbery after wielding a knife at New Yorkers in an attempt to get money from them to afford his drug addiction. He was sentenced to 10 years in prison after being identified, and in the book discusses the experience of being a New York State prisoner. There is discussion of violence inflicted by fellow convicts, as well as mistreatment and apathy on the part of Department of Corrections Employees. Structures and norms developed in prison are also discussed at length, as well as details on what he filled his days with – lots of bodybuilding and book reading. Additionally, there is discussion of the comradery, friendship and community found within prisons – though it may be hard to find. The journey of self-discovery and radical acceptance Genis takes the reader through is beautiful and oftentimes heartbreaking. This is a great read for anyone involved with the ECJC – it serves as an important reminder that our work done to circumvent the prison/legal system and prevent entrance is necessary and impactful. It is also a beautiful reminder of the impact our humanity, respect and curiosity towards others has on those we work with here at the ECJC.

The Importance of Silence



Silence oftentimes makes us uncomfortable. We squirm and itch to fill the gaps in conversation as if they are markers of failure in our communication skills. Of course, for a conversation to be effective, *something* needs to be said, but in that there is space for silence. At every step of our Restorative Justice process there is a use for silence, but in Panel, there especially is a need to **allow for silence when it comes**. Firstly, this process is intended to

be shaped around the experience and stories of the Impacted and Responsible Parties. After a Party has spoken, it is okay and often helpful to **allow for a period of quiet to reflect on what was said**. In that time that person may work up the courage and feel able to or comfortable enough to speak further and **share more with us that they may have otherwise**.

Additionally, silence occurs when we don't immediately know what to say next or have a curiosity we want to know more about right away. When this happens, it is important to know that taking a moment to carefully consider what was just shared and **use silence to gather your thoughts** intentionally is the best practice as a Panel member. When we fight the silence by filling it prematurely, we often say things that aren't necessarily impactful, valuable or touching. As Panel members and volunteers for the ECJC, there is always value and respect for what we all bring to the conversation, but to make sure that we are using our time speaking and our words in an **intentional and thoughtful manner** is a responsibility we hold and is a skill to build upon.

In silence we choose to listen, and in listening we are practicing Restorative Justice.



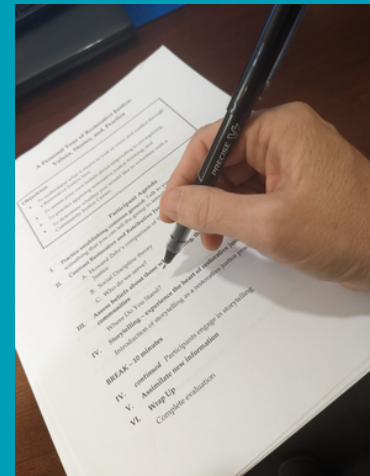
Intern Introduction



Hi, my name is Meredith Bourque and I will be an intern at ECJC for the 2022-2023 academic year. I am a student from Massachusetts, in my last year of the social work program at the University of Vermont. I am passionate about social work, particularly in the criminal justice system and reform, which is rooted in my interest in the intersections between social work and the practice of law. I'm excited for this valuable experience of community involvement and application of my learning!

Reflecting on In-Person Training Opportunities

During the month of October, the Essex Community Justice Center, re-opened its doors to the first in-person panel volunteer training since 2019. With 90% of our Restorative Justice panels taking place in-person, switching back to an in-person format seemed ideal for the volunteer training. Remembering how to train and interact with multiple people in the same room had its challenges at first, but by the end of the four-week session, the training was a huge success with eight new volunteers fully trained and motivated to bring restorative principles to their respective CJsCs. Looking ahead, ECJC plans to continue with in-person panel volunteer trainings. While we appreciate the flexibility and convenience of virtual trainings, the increased opportunity for connection and communication was invaluable.



Survey Quotes From Participants

Absolutely and entirely grateful! I'd keep doing the trainings if I could!"

"Great work fostering a community in the room. The training was highly interactive, and I especially appreciated the discussion-oriented methodology."

"Wonderful and thoughtful group of people participating. I really enjoyed refreshing my learning. Thank you. "



Focusing on the Positive



From our Restorative Reentry Coordinator Kristina Nunn

I co-facilitated the October CoSA Training on Zoom with Lee King of the FGIRJC (Franklin Grand Isle Restorative Justice Center) and had my CoSA Team participate as the Panel for “DAY 2”. The Core Member (CM) and 3 of the 4 volunteers on the team were able to answer questions for the trainees and speak to their experience on other CoSA’s.

This CM has been out for 6 months and is doing well and attending CoSA regularly.

He is well educated and spent a lot of his 11 years in prison reflecting on what he had done and how he could learn from it; why he did it, and how to repair the parts of himself that felt broken and traumatized. He takes the DOC aftercare “programming” seriously and has used it for personal growth.

I first met him (on Zoom) after he had done his own research of the CoSA program and had submitted his DOC CoSA Application for participation. He was just past his “min” (minimum time served which is when it is possible for him to get out on Furlough). Because of the nature of his crime, sex-offenses on children, he was having a difficult time finding housing so that he could be released. After a month or two of wondering when to form a CoSA team for him, ideally 1-3 months prior to release, give or take, I went ahead and formed a team of 4 volunteers. We met about once a month when we could because of COVID facility lockdowns. There were unknowns and frustrations, such as, COVID outbreaks and lockdowns, housing availability and landlord willingness, waiting lists, and when he would be released; were we being of any use to him at all. The CoSA year doesn’t technically start until our first meeting in the community after release.

Alas, it was nearly one year after our first Zoom gathering that we heard he had a release date, and we would be able to meet in person to begin our CoSA! When the team attended the CoSA Training and answered questions, the CM received a lot of positive feedback on his achievements and his professional and upbeat attitude.

I Hope that we will begin to receive a consistent flow of CoSA referrals soon! a few reasons include that I will get to see more of our wonderful volunteers more often, and the opportunity to serve, support, and get to know more folks who deserve better chances to work toward success, restorative reintegration into our community.

“Hello Everyone,

I just wanted to express my sincerest thanks to all of you for the kind comments you made about me and the opportunity to address the other CoSA members and volunteers that are joining the CoSA family. It was an honor and a privilege to speak and answer the questions that came up. I am both blessed and humbled by the help you give me and the opportunities you give me to bring forth the importance of the support CoSA provides, as well as showing the results that are possible with the right volunteers working with a Core Member, as a whole unit.

With gratitude,(the Core Member)”

You stand tall as part of our community. I am proud stand with you.” -Volunteer

“We weren’t exaggerating. Keep up the good work!” - Volunteer

“I have come to realize that Scott is very competent and dependable. He has taught me more than I could teach him; especially about the true working of our criminal justice system.” - Volunteer

“Y’all are amazing! Thank you for being a bright spot on my day! Thank you for the time you give, the care you exude, the passion you behold, the respect you show, and your commitment to humanity! I feel all warm and fuzzy inside.

In gratitude,” - Kristina Nunn, Reentry Coordinator

Other Program Updates

CoSA Update

From Kristina Nunn

No new referrals for CoSA have come in since July, but there are a couple in the works from our reach-in/visits to facilities. There have been a few folks who have opted for some extra support via Navigation services in the last few months. That typically means they need clothes, and possibly furniture, as well as other household items, someone to listen to their struggles, support them, and make connections to other resources in the community.

Where did all the CoSA's go?

We had 3 CoSA's going at the end of April '22, and even though they didn't go one year, 2 of them closed early for different reasons. It is not too uncommon, but still disappointing- and still considered successful because we were able to make some connections and show support as well as accountability. There is currently one CoSA and it is going well.

Victim Services Update

From Susanna Weller

In FY22 the Essex CJC began a program doing outreach to victims of crime. The program services individual victims (not businesses), whether or not an offender is caught. The FY22 Pilot primarily did outreach to victims of crime that were reported to the Essex Police Department that took place in the Town of Essex and the City of Essex Junction. Due to staffing of this pilot, review of the Essex PD database was not consistent. Outreach was done for cases that took place on only 72 days (20%) of the total 365 days of the fiscal year. Outreach was focused on victims of certain types of crimes: Robbery, Larceny, Domestic Violence, Assault, Burglary, and sex offenses.

In FY23 we will be continuing this work. Some of our goals for FY 23 are:

- Training volunteers to help with the outreach
- Collecting demographic data for the people we serve
- Increasing out consistency of doing outreach throughout the year.
- As capacity increases, offer supports to victims of a wider range of crimes.

ECJC Photo Album



ECJC Volunteer Appreciation Event – First in person since the pandemic – 8/3/22



It was wonderful to connect with so many community members at the August 2, 2022 National Night Out with Essex Police Department. We were thrilled to share about our work and offer space to make rock talking pieces. Our community has some great artistic talent!

Our volunteers bring so much to our work and the communities we serve! What a joy to walk into the office this morning and see this beautiful pumpkin that a volunteer had grown and tagged with CJC appreciation.



The Essex Community Justice Center had the unbelievable privilege of hosting a meeting with Osariemen Omoruyi last week AND to have her join us at our first in-person Volunteer Appreciation Event since the pandemic!! Osariemen, who also goes by Grace, was in the United States completing the Mandela Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders at Rutgers University. Grace is a leading voice for restorative justice in Nigeria and the founder of the Restorative Justice for Africa - REJA Initiative, an organization that was inspired by lived experiences of gross human rights violations. She has defended several underserved people who were abandoned in prison, and she currently pursues equal access to justice for all. Before starting REJA, she volunteered her defense skills with the Legal Aid Council of Nigeria and Hope Behind Bars Africa and has worked on donor-funded projects in partnership with Prisoners' Rights and Welfare Action. Grace referred to REJA as "a small organization with big dreams of bringing restorative justice to all of Africa". We look forward to seeing her work unfold and progress.

CoSA volunteer Peggy Lesage goes fishing in Lake Ontario every year with her husband.



Jill Evans
Director

Karen Dolan
Special Projects Coordinator
Restorative Justice Specialist

Kristina Nunn
Restorative Reentry Coordinator

Michelle Teegarden
Restorative Justice Specialist

Susanna Weller
Restorative Justice Specialist

Meredith Bourque
Restorative Justice Intern



137 Iroquois Ave, Suite 101
Essex Junction, VT 05452

(802) 872-7690

www.essexcjc.org

Visit our Facebook!

<https://www.facebook.com/people/Essex-Community-Justice-Center/100068799643702/>

Our Vision

The Essex Community Justice Center envisions safe, expansive and resilient communities in which the response to conflict and crime is restorative and healing, enhances community and reduces further harms.

Our Mission

The Essex Community Justice Center creates opportunities with the communities we serve for restorative approaches to crime and conflict that:

- Promote justice for those affected by crime by focusing on the harm caused
- Allow those responsible for harm to accept active responsibility for addressing and repairing the harm they caused
- Educate, build empathy, restore dignity, and enable healing
- Support the needs of those reintegrating from prison into a more connected community life
- Strengthen individuals and the communities we serve through education and support to prevent further harms

Our Values

We believe that all people living in a community are interconnected through a web of relationships, and that conflict and crime harms and affects people—victims, family members, community members, offenders and others. We believe that conflict and crime damages relationships, and disrupts peace and safety in the community. We believe in the inherent worth and dignity of every person and that no one should be defined by their biggest mistakes. We believe that justice is more likely to be achieved when victims, affected parties and the community are engaged in and central to the justice process. We believe that all victims of crime should have access to restorative processes upon request. We believe that effective restorative processes build empathy, restore dignity, empower victims, enable healing and strengthen communities as we strive toward a just society in which all lives have equal value. We believe in reintegration, supporting the needs of offenders and removing barriers to successful reentry while also encouraging accountability/acceptance of responsibility for harm caused. We believe that restorative justice nurtures hope – the hope of healing for victims, the hope of change for offenders, and the hope of greater civility for society.