



PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

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First Parish grants funds to C4RJ

Communities for Restorative Justice (C4RJ) is the recipient of a \$500 outreach grant from First Parish Church United of Westford to support C4RJ's efforts to build awareness in Westford. Recently, the Westford Police Department announced it would work with C4RJ to employ restorative justice in certain criminal cases in town.

The First Parish grant will be targeted to particular events in Westford to discuss restorative justice practices and to develop C4RJ's volunteer base. A working group of Westford residents has already been actively laying the groundwork for restorative justice in town.

The First Parish Outreach Grant program was established in 2008 to direct the congregation's Outreach and Social Justice funds to support the passion of parishioners. Any parishioner can nominate an organization; if the grant is awarded, the parishioner then educates the congregation about the organization. First Parish member Chris Sanders, who volunteers with C4RJ, wrote the grant application. Sanders will work with C4RJ to bring an information session to First Parish, which will also be open to the public. "We're thrilled to be part of bringing C4RJ to Westford," said Rev. Cindy Worthington-Berry, pastor of First Parish Church United. "This is a model that is transformative on so many different levels."

C4RJ offers restorative justice as a complement to the criminal justice system, providing victims of crime the opportunity to be heard and understood. Offenders are held accountable for their actions in constructive ways. Community members offer support for both. Restorative Justice asks questions not always posed in the traditional justice system, such as: "What harm has occurred to the victim and the community?" and "How will this harm be repaired and by whom?" C4RJ employs a "circle" process in which offenders, victims, community members, volunteers and a police officer discuss harms done and then develop repair agreements.

"We are delighted to have this support from First Parish as we begin our work in Westford," said C4RJ Executive Director Jennifer Larson Sawin. "We know First Parish will be an important partner as we build awareness of our program in Westford and surrounding communities."

For more information regarding restorative justice, visit www.c4rj.com or call 978-318-3447.

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