

Glenda DuBoise, Executive Director

Greetings Members and Friends of The Topeka Center for Peace and Justice,

It is an honor to greet each of you. As we move towards the end of this year, we reflect on a year that has been unprecedented and challenging in many unique ways we had not expected. Since we are here and compelled to learn new adaptation skills, we do it with a thankful heart and mind.

As members and supporters of the Topeka Center for Peace and Justice please know that we are most thankful for your support. As we move forward, we ask for your continued support and input as we strive to reach out to those who have not been involved or supported our work in the past. Please know that we remain strong, steadfast, and committed to our mission to promote peace and justice using Restorative Justice Principles.

The journey to peace and justice is not an easy path. However, it is one that in the current environment as it has in the past, calls each of us to work collaboratively and in harmony, build relationships and create a safe community. Thus, the work of our programs, mission minded advocacy, civic engagement and collaborative partnerships will continue to grow. The need for our work is only growing stronger.

Congratulations to each of this year's Topeka Center for Peace and Justice Peace Builder Award Recipients! Thank you for the work that you have done and will continue to do to promote peace and justice in our community.

A special Thank You to the Officers and members of Interfaith of Topeka for selecting the Topeka Center for Peace and Justice as the donation benefactor of 2020 Virtual Thanksgiving Service.

May each of you have a safe and healthy remainder of 2020 and all of 2021!



HEALING THE IMPACT OF GUN VIOLENCE

A restorative practitioner at a West Oakland (California) Middle School, Scott says "the most important thing is giving students more power and a voice. In this multi-cultural setting where all students are eligible for free or reduced lunch, Scott uses practices like community-building circles and cooperative games to make this happen. He begins with a check-in and a "mindful moment," so kids can focus in."

Games help students speak their truth, from safe subjects like favorite colors to serious matters like family relationships.
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The key is finding the right topic — not so light that kids will “check out,” and not so heavy it opens wounds that can’t be addressed before they leave for the next class. It’s also about modeling behavior. “They soak up everything I say and do,” Scott explains. “So I show up every day in a consistent, loving, patient and thoughtful way and demonstrate how I want them to interact with each other.”

In a weekly boys group class, a student shared his experience witnessing a shooting. Scott models for the kids: if something strikes a chord with your own life, step up and share. This story struck a chord with everyone in class. Scott could tell they’d been carrying their stories with them, afraid to share them. He helps the boys weave circles about their experiences witnessing gun violence.

The boys decided to record their experiences, interviewing each other using restorative questions. “It was amazing to see them react to each other’s stories and help each other out,” he says.

“We Had to Say No,” the project’s title, is from one of the interviews. The project website explains: “While brandishing a gun, the perpetrator asks our student and his younger brother, ‘Did y’all see anything?’ This moment epitomizes the terror and silence that surrounds it, for as our student recalls, he ‘had to say no.’”

This project emphatically taught our students that it is okay to say ‘yes.’” Hear the boys’ stories at:

<http://www.ousd.org/Page/17852>

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<https://www.iirp.edu/images/pdf/Restorative-Works-2019.pdf>

Lindsey Anderson

Program Director



Thanks to continued funding from the Kansas Department of Corrections Reinvestment Grant, TCPJ is continuing to implement a continuum of care for our most vulnerable youth.

The Topeka Peace Center is serving as the lead agency for SAVE (Strategies Against Violence Everywhere) thus coordinating the community-based strategies for gun violence intervention.

Utilizing Restorative Practices as the foundation, we provide services including Restorative Circles, Victim-Offender and Parent-Adolescent Mediation as an opportunity for those involved in a conflict or disruption to have a safe and secure space to hold a structured conversation about what occurred. The Restorative Justice Principles enables participants to:

- ◆ Focus on repairing the harm done.
- ◆ Give victims a voice in the process.
- ◆ Build community relationships.
- ◆ Resolve conflict through dialogue and creative problem solving.

Committed to the Principles of Restorative Justice we continue to provide training opportunities to Administration, Educators, Building Leaders, and school support staff.

The Voice of a Student

While in circles I valued just being able to have a voice and feel empowered. I think that it is really important for women to be able to feel like that, especially in the times we are going through right now in history. I don't want any women to ever feel like they are alone or what they feel like doesn't matter. With the circles I feel as though it

More than passing a stick



Restorative Practice Dialogue is more than passing a stick around a circle. **Nancy Kelley, TCPJ** Restorative Practices coordinator explains: The structure of a restorative gathering provides the opportunity to have a dialogue about important issues in a diverse community.

Participants agree to the ground rules for the gathering that characteristically encourage everyone to speak from the heart, listen from the heart, speak spontaneously, without feeling rushed, just say enough, welcome and expect differing points of view. The "stick" or talking piece indicates whose turn it is to speak with no interruptions while everyone else listens to gain understanding. Restorative structure in community dialogue works because everyone in the gathering has a voice and everyone is given the opportunity to feel heard. The structure is intentional and brings people holding diverse experiences and viewpoints together to participate in meaningful conversations. The intent of a Restorative structure is to build stronger communities by building respectful relationships and taking responsibility for being a member of that community. Stronger communities lead to healthier communities which is why Topeka Center for Peace and Justice is proud to partner with the Greater Topeka Partnership in "A Seat at the Table Series with Nancy Kelley, TCPJ Restorative Practices Coordinator providing training on Restorative Practices Dialogue to Series facilitators and table hosts.

Restorative Practices at Topeka High

This is my favorite talking piece. I found it in the garage of the house I moved into here in Topeka two years ago. It is a trophy from the Topeka Suburban Baseball League awarded to someone in 1970. It has no monetary or personal sentimental value. I just thought it would be a fun talking piece because it is a little quirky. I also like what it represents; *an accomplishment*. There is little specific information. It doesn't tell who the trophy belongs to or why it was awarded.



I started here at Topeka High two years ago. I spent the first semester trying to get my bearings. A month into the second semester I felt my classes needed to be a bit more harmonious. I decided to try doing a class circle. I was skeptical about one of my classes in particular not taking it seriously, but they amazed me with their openness. We ended up doing circles three times that semester. Not only did we become closer as a class, but individual students came to me later to tell me more about their lives or to talk to me about difficulties they experienced or to just say hi. Some would come and sit in my room if they were having a hard time and just needed a minute.

My second year (last year), I did circles with my classes in both the first and second quarters. It definitely makes a difference in the culture of the classroom. Students learn that you value them as people first. As such, they are more likely to take the academic risks that help them become the best students they can be. The process obviously did not work for all students and it is certainly not a panacea for academic apathy, but I do believe the benefits are real.

In the last two years I have had two students suffer significant personal losses and because I had already built relationships with them, I have been able to offer a layer of support that I would not have known was needed had that relationship not been in place.

Ms. Abbiell Hirsh, Teacher: History & German

A SEAT AT THE TABLE: GREATER TOPEKA PARTNERSHIP SERIES

When someone offers you *A Seat At the Table*, it usually demonstrates a sign of power and influence. It indicates that individual has the ability to effect change, the power to make decisions and to courage to plot a course. Imagine intimate evening of open and honest dialogue about **our** community. The GTP's goal is to educate and connect with a diverse group of Shawnee County citizens; consider where we are now and where we want to be as a community. We live in a time of transition where everything is in flux. Our hope is that these conversations will build a solid foundation where we begin to understand one another, appreciate each other's differences, and discover our similarities. Conversations will center around racial equity and equality, inclusion, and social justice or current events of the day. GTP believes that once barriers are removed, we can eliminate the disparities that hinder our growth as a community. They also believe that this platform will allow everyone to learn, contribute and understand their role as we build a more inclusive community. To learn more about A Seat at the Table visit: <https://visit.topekapartnership.com/a-seat-at-the-table/>

2020 Topeka Center for Peace and Justice Honorees

Because of Covid-19, we will not be hosting the annual Ragtime Peace Party this year. However, we will be celebrating with Interfaith of Topeka's Thanksgiving Service. Interfaith of Topeka selected the Peace Center as this year's beneficiary for all donations generated at this celebration. Please see the flyer on page for more information about this event. It is during this Service that TCPJ will recognize and say "Thank you" to the those who have made significant strides as Peace Builders in our community in the following categories:

Lifetime Achievement: TPD Police Chief Bill Cochran

Chief Bill Cochran started his career in Law Enforcement on July 13th, 1987 was assigned to deep undercover narcotics. Through his time, he has worked in several capacities at TPD including homicide, traffic, patrol, field operations and criminal investigations. Before Cochran became the chief, he was a major in criminal investigations as the Bureau Commander. Cochran was officially named the police chief in January of 2018. He took the job with a big hurdle ahead of him as 2017 became the deadliest year on record in Topeka. Cochran has also served in the Army National Guard from February 1985 until he retired as a First Lieutenant in July of 2005. He served one combat tour in Iraq in 2004. Chief Cochran has always worked tirelessly on efforts to make Topeka a safe community. His vision was that stopping street violence would be a community-based response and came to the Topeka Center for Peace and Justice for help to create a collaborative effort to that end. As a result, SAVE (Strategies Against Violence Everywhere) was created and is now in the implementation process.



Youth: Chrishala Adams



Chrishayla is a senior at Topeka High School. She has recently been elected by her peers as the President of Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG-K) where she sets to make plans, not dreams. In discussing her future after high school, Adams speaks matter-of-factly: She will be a lawyer. Adams has already been accepted into six colleges, but she has her mind set on either Kansas State University or the University of Kansas, where she said she will study criminology with a major in African American studies.

"When that does happen, I know I want to be a part of a movement that's bigger than myself," she said. "Right now, there are a lot of things happening in the world where there's something that needs to be done, and I feel like a lot of people don't have the voice yet to speak out and say something about it. I feel that if I can help be a part of that change and push people to that point, we can affect our community life."

Organization: Onmi Circle

Onmi Circle is a like-minded community earning a stellar reputation as the premier community networking group. We're a multi-cultural, multi-generational community with an emphasis on advancing minorities, developing leaders, and entrepreneurs to drive an economic impact in Topeka.

Our mission is to unite and strengthen communities, by adding value to the personal and professional development of our members, by promoting achievement and preparation for global competitiveness. Onmi Circle is providing a professional working environment where community members can comfortably explore their creativity, passion and success anchored to the values of connectivity, collaboration and productive co-working for future leaders.

It's important to not only have a network of individuals who have shared experiences but to also be surrounded by like minded individuals who crave change. Onmi is helping to facilitate the change we so desperately need to see. Our family is proud to be part of a group who thrives off of the idea to provide better for a community that deserves it."



Michael Odupitan CEO/Founder of Onmi Circle.



2020 Volunteer: Bob Williams, TCPJ Mediator

I became involved with mediation at the suggestion of a friend. I checked into it and found it to be a good fit. I enrolled in the required courses at Johnson County Community College. My Master's degree was in Family and Child Development and Marriage/Family Counseling. The skills I learned in graduate school were very similar to the skills required of a mediator. However, I found the mediation process to be more rewarding than the therapy process.

In order to be approved by the Kansas Supreme Court, I needed to do some co-mediations. Enter the Topeka Center for Peace and Justice. At that time the Peace Center was participating in a diversion program for first time juvenile offenders. The goal was to provide some closure for victims and to help the juvenile offenders gain some insights regarding consequences of their actions. When the Program Director resigned, Bill Beachy hired me to run the program. We did several mediations a week. It took some convincing to get victims to participate. However, without exception, they found the mediation process very helpful with getting answers to their questions and obtaining closure.

Parents/guardians found the mediation process helpful with reinforcing their own "house rules" and actively participated in the process. It was particularly rewarding to see the reactions from juveniles when victims explained how the offense affected their lives.

I firmly believe the Peace Center has had a profoundly positive affect on the lives of many individuals. Many years ago, at a community event, a young man came up to me and thanked me. He said the mediation changed his life. You can't put a price on something like that.

As the Scottish Theologian, Carl Bard said: "Though no one can go back and make a brand-new start, anyone can start and make a brand new ending."

Virtual
Interfaith
Thanksgiving
Service

Giving Thanks amid Challenges

Sunday, November 22
7 pm – 8 pm

See event link at www.interfaithoftopeka.org or on our FB page

Members of our community will share how their
faith/spiritual tradition offers
strength in challenging times.

Topeka Center for Peace and Justice
is the freewill offering
recipient.

Topeka Center for Peace & Justice Contributors

October 1, 2019 through September 30, 2020

Fall 2020

HEROES \$10,000+

Topeka Community Foundation KS Reinvestment
Shawnee Corrections
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MEMBERS \$25-\$99

Glenda DuBoise
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Keeshan Leslie Kendall
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Dona and Lary Booe
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Juliet Hemphill
Josh Lutrell
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day
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Alice Eberhart-Wright
Shannon and Arron Harrison
Sharon Highberger
Deborah and Thomas Goering
Lanette Farmer
Joanne Morrell
Ellen Backus
Marie Carter

Thank you for your support in our efforts to bring peace and justice to our community.

Instead of hosting the annual Ragtime Peace Party we are honored to be the freewill offering recipients of Interfaith of Topeka's Thanksgiving Service. To make a donation go to Topekacpj.org/donate/