

Topeka Center FOR Peace & Justice

From the Executive Director

Jim McCollough, Executive Director



Peace Center Friends!

We wanted to catch you up on some of the exciting things that are happening through the efforts of the Topeka Center for Peace and Justice. We had a very successful annual Peace Party toward the end of last year, and an incredible celebration of "Whose Dream Is It?" our annual observance of Martin Luther King Jr.'s life and legacy. We want you to know what is happening with our mediation program, our restorative justice program with schools in the Topeka USD #501 district, and with S.T.A.R.S. (our human trafficking initiative). We want to share some news about a fairly new initiative called "Be The Bridge", and we also have some exciting news coming out of our Violence Prevention Task Force, as we make preparations for our first ever conference on "Healing Gun Violence". So, take note of articles in this edition of the newsletter from our mediation director, Lindsey Anderson, our Board Chair Edie Snethen, our S.T.A.R.S. director, Dr. Sharon Sullivan, and our Be The Bridge coordinator, Dr. Glenda Bower. There is also some information in this edition regarding our annual Peace Camp. So, there's lots going on! We are so grateful to all our supporter who help us keep these programs going strong!

Police Chief Bill Cochran will be one of the community leaders participating in the June 7, **Healing Gun Violence** conference sponsored by Topeka Center for Peace and Justice, JUMP, Stormont Vail Health and Moms Demand Action.



Under Chief Cochran's leadership, the Topeka Police Department has been chosen to enter a Supporting Innovations Project with the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF). Founded in 1976 as a nonprofit organization, the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) is a police research and policy organization and provides management services, technical assistance, and executive-level education to support law enforcement agencies. PERF helps to improve the delivery of police services through the exercise of strong national leadership; public debate of police and criminal justice issues; and research and policy development.

The goal of the conference will be to present evidence-based programs to reduce gun violence in Topeka. Cochran will be one of the community leaders who will be engaged in defining strategies for reducing violence in consultation with the Network for Safe Communities.

"Healing Gun Violence: Exploring Evidence-based Strategies to Create a Safer Community"

Keynote Address by Paul Davis Smith

National Network for Safe Communities

SAVE THE DATE

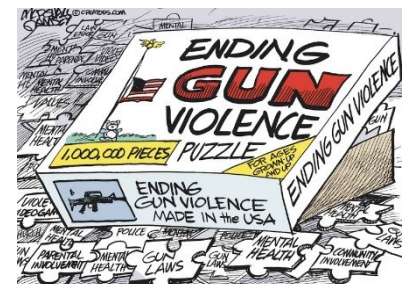
Date: June 7, 8:00 a.m.-12:00 (noon)

Location: Pozez Education Center

**On the campus of Stormont Vail Health
1500 SW 10th Street, Topeka Kansas 66606**

Registration Fee: \$10.00 (limited scholarships available)

For more information and to register visit topekacpj.org



Restorative Justice & Mediation—Lindsey Anderson, TCPJ Programs Director

Since 2015, the Topeka Center for Peace and Justice has partnered with the District Attorney's Office and Court Services to offer Victim-Offender and Parent-Adolescent Mediation to youth ages 10-18. The youth have received criminal charges and successfully participate in mediation are eligible for a diversion program to keep these charge(s) off their permanent record. The program is currently funded by the Kansas Department of Corrections Reinvestment Grant. Following are some updates:

- TCPJ has a partnership with Washburn University Criminal Justice and Legal Studies Department training students in Mediation Practices. Over 30 students have been trained in Core Mediation over the last 4 years! The students volunteer with the Mediation Program by co-mediating with a Mentor Mediator to practice and learn new mediation strategies and skills.
- Assessing the needs of the community is an important aspect of the Mediation Program. Our findings have led TCPJ to develop a Community Victim's Panels. The Community Victim's Panel members represent the interests of the broader community and often stand in for the victim, working with mediator and offender to come to a resolution that serves the needs of all parties. If a victim wishes to participate in the restorative justice procedure, the case are facilitated by TCPJ's Program Director and their mediators. If there is no direct victim, or the victim declines to participate, a Community Victim's Panel session is scheduled for the case.

June is **National Gun Violence Awareness Month**. In keeping with the Restorative Justice movement, the Topeka Center for Peace & Justice's Violence Prevention Task Force is partnering with Topeka Jump and Stormont-Vail Health and invite you to our half day event: **"Healing Gun Violence: Exploring Evidence-based Strategies to Create a Safer Community"**. The Conference objectives include:

- Perception versus Reality: Compare the perception of gun violence in the Topeka/Shawnee County area to data on area gun violence.
- Solutions: Explore evidence-based community initiatives that address gun violence as a public health issue.



- Making it work for us: Identify steps to implement community-based efforts to sharply reduce gun violence in Topeka/Shawnee County.

The conference Keynote Speaker is Paul Davis Smith, Director of the Chicago Violence Reduction Strategy with the National Network for Safe Communities. Prior to joining the National Network, Mr. Smith was the Public Safety Coordinator for the City of Chattanooga. He was responsible for managing Chattanooga's Group Violence Reduction Strategy and coordinated with city officials, law enforcement, social service providers and community members to develop and implement the strategy. Mr. Smith was also the Executive Principal of Howard School where he supervised two deputy principals, a program director, four vice-principals, ninety-four teachers, and twenty-six support staff for approximately eleven-hundred students. During Mr. Smith's tenure, Howard School increased the graduation rate from 46% to 88% and reduced truancy from 83% to 17%.

This is something you don't want to miss. Seating is limited to register early for this event!

Stop Trafficking And Resist Slavery

Many folks want to help survivors of human trafficking, but they just don't know how. Here are three of our programs to directly support human trafficking victim/survivors:

Fresh Start Kits

People escaping exploitation and abuse often have nothing but the clothes on their backs. They leave when they can and however they can. We can help them on their journey to create a new life for themselves and their children with a Fresh Start Kit.

The Fresh Start Kits provide basic needs like clothing and hygiene items to help a person leaving human trafficking or intimate partner violence. This year we are excited to partner with area Rotary clubs to collect and package the items that make a real difference in the lives of people in our community. The advocates at YWCA Center for Safety and Empowerment, the Open Door Project, Restore Hope, and LifeHouse will distribute the bags directly to clients who need them.

Safeline

A prepaid smartphone can be a literal lifesaver for someone in danger!

With all the tracking applications available on phones now, it's crucial that people escaping their abuser have a new phone. Victims need to make calls and use the internet without alerting their abuser to their location. A person in transition may not have access to a phone or the internet, but they need to access information, apply for jobs and call for help. A Safeline is a stepping stone to freedom and independence.

Please donate prepaid smart with Wi-Fi access cellphones and phone cards for three months of service to help people escaping exploitation and abuse.

"Be an Angel Project" Victim Assistance Fund

STARS has established a community to specifically address a victim's need at a state of crisis or escape and can be accessed by a local advocate anytime day or night to ensure victims' needs are met. When funds are accessed STARS reach out to area "Angels" to request s/he send the amount spent on the victim, up to the dollar amount pledged. Angels are only asked to provide funds once per year, and only up to the amount pledged.

Example: Suzy comes into shelter, and wants to relocate to escape her trafficker. Suzy has a support system in Albuquerque, NM, but no funds to get there. Her life is endangered if she stays in Topeka. Her advocate has determined the best option is to get Suzy out of the shelter right away. A train ticket to Albuquerque, one-way, costs \$84. The train leaves at 12:30 a.m. A ticket can be purchased. Jennie obtains from STARS the exact amount needed for the train ticket, purchases the ticket for Suzy, takes her to the station. The next morning, STARS contacts Fred and Bonnie Smith, who are the next pledge on the list, and informs them that thanks to their pledge, we were able to use \$84.00 to get a victim transportation to a safe place. Fred and Bonnie write a check for \$84.00, and send it to STARS, noting it is for the Be An Angel Project. They will not be contacted for another pledge until the next year. Their check replenishes the victim assistance account.

All help is appreciated! Here is the link to make a [donation](#). We are so grateful to our community for supporting victims and survivors in our community. If you have questions or want to request a presentation, please contact STARS director, Sharon Sullivan at sharon.sullivan@washburn.edu.



Four years ago, the Topeka Center for Peace and Justice partnered with Eisenhower Middle School to implement Restorative Justice Circles. The impact of this evidence-based approach to school discipline was very positive. Eisenhower Middle School saw a significant reduction in the number of fights and suspensions.

Based on these positive outcomes, we focused on how to expand the RJ Circle program to other community schools. This program expansion was one of four programs funded under a three-year P.E.A.C.E. grant from Downtown Topeka Rotary Club. These funds were used to provide restorative justice practices training for school staff members. Once trained, teachers provided school data on program implementation, barriers, experiences, and impact.

An Advisory Team, established to develop support for those trained in their efforts to implement the program, has gained several insights that have guided decisions:

- Transitioning from a Zero Tolerance Punitive Justice discipline approach to a Restorative Justice discipline approach is a major shift in the school culture. If a school has only one staff person trained as a circle facilitator, it is very difficult for that person to singlehandedly implement the program. Those schools with several trained staff members had a higher success rate in implementing the program.
- Based on this feedback, our focus shifted from training someone from as many schools as possible, to focusing on a few schools that would send several staff members to be trained in RJ practices and implementation. We also developed a presentation used to teach all other school staff about the restorative justice approach, so they better understand and support the cultural shift.
- The need for our own cadre of local trainers as identified as key to sustainability. We have trained seven trainers, utilizing Colorado State University's on-line train-the-trainer course for restorative justice practices in schools. A second train-the-trainer course is scheduled for this summer and will include Washburn University faculty

interested in partnering with us to bring restorative justice practices to more schools.

- Based on feedback received from those who are completing the CSU train-the-trainer training, we are now developing our own curriculum for future trainings.

Martin Luther King Jr. once said:

"Human progress is neither automatic nor inevitable... Every step toward the goal of justice requires sacrifice, suffering, and struggle; the tireless exertions and passionate concern of dedicated individuals."

Over the past three years, the trained school staff have demonstrated a remarkable example of "the tireless exertions and passionate concern of dedicated individuals." Through their efforts and commitment, they are improving the lives of our youth by teaching them about conflict resolution and the importance of building positive relationships. We are very grateful for their work, as well as that of the Rotary volunteers on the Advisory Team and our new partnership with Washburn University.

Peace Camp 2019

July 22 - 26 8 am - 1 pm

Peace Camp is a week-long summer camp that teaches children who have completed kindergarten - 5th grade about conflict resolution, cooperation and teamwork, bullying prevention, and diversity.



It's also a ton of FUN!

Located at First Congregational Church
1701 SW Collins Ave

Click link for [Registration](#): \$50,
includes breakfast and lunch

Contributors to the Topeka Center for Peace and Justice

April 1, 2018 – March 31, 2019

SPRING 2019

HEROS \$10000 +

Shawnee Corrections
Don and Edith Snethen
Topeka Rotary Foundation
Debra & Randy Clayton

CHAMPPIONS \$9999-\$4500

Topeka Community Foundation
Richard Alexander

PATRONS \$3,000-\$1000

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Great Plains Annual Conf. UMC
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Bette Morris
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Jerry & Sandra Quiring
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ALLIES \$999-\$500

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Temple Beth Sholom
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Trinity Presbyterian Church
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Ximena Garcia
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SUSTAINERS \$499-\$150

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Topeka Friends Meeting
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Tim & Carolyn Voth
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David & Lynnette Beck
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David & Sue Blackman
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Gwen Elliott
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Rebecca Morrisey
David Wexler
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Martha Spacek
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West Side Christian Church
Jenny Fitzgerald
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Unity Church of Christianity
Rosemary Menninger
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Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority
Sally Fronsman-Cecil
Ben and Judy Coates
Lisa Tevis
Annie Miller
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day
Teresa Taylor
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First Christian Church
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Lanette Farmer
Deborah Goering
Peter Tremain
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Pamela Ensley
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Mary Jennings
Josephine Hodison
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Sarah Weber
Becky Bolte
Dolores & Frank Werder
Sonia Akpabio
Elizabeth Bermann-Harms
Mercedes & John Craughwell

FAMILY FUN NIGHT
"Turning Newcomers into Neighbors"
Topeka Discovery Center
May 14, 2019 5:30-7:30 pm
Admission—Free

This event is for families with children; newborn to 12 years. Supper will be provided. There are wonderful hands-on learning opportunities both inside and outside for children and their parents. Adults can also learn about community resources. All children need to be with adult supervision.

This evening is hosted by ***Be the Bridge***, a new program of the Topeka Center for Peace and Justice, through a grant from the Topeka Community Foundation. It is supported by El Centro, VIDA, the Islamic Center, Temple Beth Shalom, and area congregations. All are working together to make Topeka a more welcoming community.

It promises to be a wonderful fun night. If you know of a family that would like to participate please RSVP by calling 785-232-8207 or elcentrooftopeka.org as space is limited.