

*From
Corrections to
Connections:*
**Working
-With-
Girls**



An AMICUS Program

**A Newsletter
Serving
Individuals
Working with
Female Juvenile
Offenders**

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Issue 5

RADIUS – excerpt from AMICUS 2004-2006 Biennial Report

In 2000, AMICUS used research on girls' needs plus the principles of restorative justice to launch one of the few programs nationwide that is designed from the ground up to meet the needs of girls. Since it was first implemented to work with serious and chronic female juvenile offenders committed to the commissioner of corrections, AMICUS' programs for girls have spread. AMICUS began offering services to girls on probation in Ramsey County in 2003, and found the girls' program model (consisting of weekly Girls Groups led by an experienced counselor, individual counseling to address trauma and ongoing issues, restorative justice support circles, and support and referral services) to be equally effective with this lower-risk population.

The RADIUS program is thriving today, and the past two years have shown continued growth and recognition for the program. These changes include:

- **Developed new name and logo.** Thanks to a generous in-kind donation by Spyglass Creative Group, AMICUS' "Girls Restorative Justice Program" became RADIUS in 2006. The name is designed to evoke the girl-centered nature of the program, which helps girls develop strength that radiates from within and surrounds them with circles of adults who care for them, support them, and provide relationship-based accountability. The new name establishes a solid "brand identity" for RADIUS as AMICUS continues to spread the model.
- **Gained national exposure.** AMICUS presented the RADIUS model at three national corrections conferences: the National Workshop on Adult and Juvenile Female Offenders, the American Corrections Association conference, and the Women and Corrections conference.
- **Provided training and consulting on working with girls.** RADIUS staff trained Ramsey County Juvenile Detention Center staff in gender-responsive philosophy. Even more exciting, AMICUS convened a group of juvenile justice staff and nonprofit agencies in fall 2005 to energize providers in the Arrowhead region around the needs of girls. As an outgrowth of these discussions, AMICUS provided extensive technical assistance to help Duluth-based nonprofit Men as Peacemakers develop a community-based program for girls (similar to the Ramsey County model).

Biennial Report cont'd

- **Began new partnership with the Ramsey County Juvenile Detention Center (JDC).** A 2005 pilot project offered a weekly “Girl’s Group” to over 100 additional girls staying at the JDC. JDC staff reported a dramatic change in the atmosphere on the unit, and evaluations from girls were extremely positive. Thanks to this success, girls at the JDC began receiving full RADIUS services through a new “JDC to Community” program in July 2006. This program begins during a short stay in the JDC and continues seamlessly when girls return to probation status. Especially with the recent loss of residential-based capacity for girls (closure of the St. Croix camps), Ramsey County staff are excited to have this option for girls who may need a little time out-of-home. The JDC program has a capacity of 8 girls at a time and is expected to serve up to 100 additional girls in 2006-2007 (more than doubling the size of the former probation-based program).
- **Continued Growth for the “state girls” program at Woodland Hills, a residential facility in Duluth.** Increases in the numbers of girls served led to the creation of two separate group formats for girls in spring of 2006, a Trauma group which all girls attend, and a smaller, closed Survivors group that deals intensively with sexual violence. Both groups teach girls better coping and day-to-day survival skills and bring them toward an understanding of the trauma they have caused to their victims. RADIUS-State also places considerable emphasis on restorative justice circles. Beginning in 2005, AMICUS began recruiting and training a pool of “Circle Keepers” across the state to cover the wide geographical area served and spread the intensive work of family contact, and this setup has worked well. RADIUS-State provided seven Circles in FY 2005-2006, including one celebratory circle for a girl’s completion of the program, four family circles to discuss transition and ongoing issues, and two internal victim-offender circles arising from violent incidents at the facility. Two external victim-offender circles (in high-profile cases involving a fatality) are currently in process. Though many more Circles are explored than actually convened, the Circle process is transformational for those who do participate and effective in helping these high-need, high-risk girls and families make progress.

Overall, 2005-2006 were exciting years for the RADIUS programs. AMICUS is developing a reputation for expertise and excellence in services to girls, and many more girls are getting the services they both need and deserve. AMICUS is committed to continuing its model programs, as well as to providing statewide education, consulting and technical assistance to help more communities meet the needs of girls.

View complete report at: <http://www.amicususa.org>

Highlight: Restorative Justice

Restorative Justice is a philosophy that is integral to the work that RADIUS does, as well as AMICUS as a whole. There are often a lot of questions from people we work with about what “restorative justice” means or how we can describe the “circle process” and how it is beneficial in our organization and for our clients. While the best way to “know” circle is to learn it firsthand, we have provided some thoughts on circle from circle keepers at AMICUS, as well as information on where to go for more information.

WHAT IS RESTORATIVE JUSTICE?

Being Restorative is a philosophy that attempts to restore wholeness and balance... *with* others. Restorative Justice means doing something *with* others to try to repair harm... not doing something “for” or “to” others. It involves victims, offenders and the community.

WHAT IS A CIRCLE?

We sit in a Circle. We use a Talking Piece. A Talking piece is an item held and passed around the Circle. When you have it you get to speak or hold silence. When you don't have it you need to be listening. We speak and listen respectfully with our hearts. We have the right to pass. We respect confidentiality. (However, Circles need to talk about confidentiality up front. If someone in the Circle is legally required to report to the state any information he or she hears, participants need to know this from the outset). Circles honor silence.

We help each girl bring together family, community members, past/present support people (teachers, social workers, counselors, parole/probation officers, tribal elders, foster parents etc.) into a “Circle of Support”. The Circle meets to discuss what's important and talk about problems openly and work towards healing and resolution. Circles make written agreements that become part of the “plan”.

The Circle is ancient, reciprocal, confidential, honorable, inclusive, validating, creative, helpful, constructive, trustworthy, voluntary, continuous, cyclical, respectful, hopeful.....

RESOURCE CORNER: RJ

The Little Book of Circle Processes, Kay Pranis
<http://www.goodbks.com>

The Peacemaking Circle, Boston Research Center

Web Site

* Provides definitions of Peacemaking Circles as well as links to more information.

http://www.brc21.org/resources/res_circle.html

The Restorative Way, Jamie Williams and Oscar Reed

* Provide opportunities for training on Restorative Justice, links to MN resources on Restorative Justice

<http://www.therestorativeway.org/>

Additional Books of Interest:

* *Justice As Healing: Indigeneous Ways, Writings on Community Peacemaking and Restorative Justice* from the Native Law Centre – Wanda D. McCaslin, Editor

* *Making the Most of Today: Daily Readings for Young People on Self-Awareness, Creativity, & Self-Esteem* – Pamela Espeland & Rosemary Wallner

* *Native Wisdom for White Minds: Daily Reflections Inspired by the Native Peoples of the World* – Anne Wilson Schaeff

* *Peacemaking Circles: From Crime to Community* – Kay Pranis, Barry Stuart, Mark Wedge

RADIUS Woodland Hills Girls Share Their Voice...

Survivors

We call ourselves "Survivors" in the group that we are in and 'who' we are. We meet once a week. Our group is set in "Circle" style, including the counter-clockwise rotation and the talking piece. We do check in. Sometimes it's quick, but always diverse..some girls feel really good but some feel icky. And sometimes we throw in a little therapy session for those who feel icky that day. That's what's really cool. That who really needs help and wants help gets it. The kind of help that is safe to talk about. Where as sometimes living with 10-13 other girls this unselfish behavior is hard to come across. Our survivor group as we call it, is a very unselfish group. It's a group of on average has 10-12 girls from the two groups here at Woodland Hills. Survivors is very 'sacred', we don't bring anything from Survivors group into our regular treatment groups. We get real and down to the nitty gritty bare bones of things and our problems, our past. Our group facilitator has our respect and she is an authority figure but she makes us feel very equal and comfortable. With lots of adults dealing with teens these days it often feels as if they are better than us. Our facilitator makes us feel safe. After the 'check-in' we usually have a topic, a series of questions and discussion, or a project we like to focus on. Well have our chance to say what we feel and openly speak our opinions. We cover things everywhere from our personal experiences with rape, assault, abuse, neglect, the laws, unhealthy relationships, cutting, running away, and many more things such as anniversary dates and terms lie 'snitching' and our personal value beliefs.

Another very important part of Survivors group is laughter! We often really enjoy incorporating a few true deep down to the pit of your stomach laughs! And by the time to "check-out" we are for the most part feeling better than we did when we walked into group. Most importantly Survivors groups is a comfortable, safe place where we are all welcome and can express exactly what we need to. We give and take good advice and care for each other. We cover some tough but touchy subjects while showing utmost respect. We build relationships, have fun, and find the true survivor within us all!

Advice from the "Survivors" on how to help teen-aged girls:

- Don't Judge Us
- Don't Talk "institutional"
- Be there even when you don't have to be
- Really listen to us and not just hear what we're saying
- Just hearing what we have to say and maybe relating to us
 - Understanding out points of view
 - Just being real
 - Taking time to get to know us
- Have patience.."it will happen when it happens"
- Empathize with is and understand when ever it helps
 - Be open with us

Please pass this newsletter on to anyone who may be interested. Past issues can be viewed on our web site, <http://www.amicususa.org>. Requests to subscribe/unsubscribe can be made to: Jennifer@amicususa.org.