

Washington County Community Circles, Inc.

Cottage Grove, Stillwater, and Woodbury

Volunteer Hours by Community Volunteers in 2008:

- Cottage Grove: 738 hours
- Stillwater: 230 hours
- Woodbury: 650 hours
- WCCC, Inc. Board and Shared Community Volunteer: 210 hours

Examples of Cases Referred:

- Domestic Abuse
- Cases with Significant Harm (Car Accidents)
- Non-Criminal Cases (Parenting Time/Custody)
- Gross Misdemeanor and Misdemeanor Criminal

Values

In Washington County, all Circles share the following core values.

Respect

Respect ensures that every participant experiences *acceptance* into the Circle, and ensures that everyone is heard with *equality*.

Humility

Humility means there is *inclusiveness* in the Circle. Recognition of the *humanness* of self and others helps to create cooperation between participants.

Compassion

A compassionate *focus on harm*, combined with the *flexibility* of Circles, allows victims to be involved in the Circles process in whatever ways are comfortable for them. Compassion felt by Circle participant's enables the Circle to take positive action to repair those issues, which contributed to the harm done.

Spirituality

Spirituality celebrates the wholeness of each person the oneness of the Circle. It allows participants to *speak from the heart*. Holding a Circle means *creating a sacred space* where these values are honored.

Honesty

Two important elements in a Circle, *accountability* and *trust*, are based on honesty. People need the support of others to make affirmative changes in their lives, and honesty with oneself and others is the basis for building those strong relationships within communities.

WCCC Restorative Justice Circle Process

Responding to Crime

Community Circles, also known as Peacemaking Circles, are a community-directed process most commonly used for addressing issues surrounding local incidents of crime. Washington County Community Circles are created in partnership with the justice system, and create a respectful space to support victims, develop sentencing agreements for offenders, and empower all interested community members to work toward preventing future occurrences of crime.

Cases brought to the Circles process go through several steps. There can be separate Circles for victims and offenders, a Sentencing Circle to develop offender sentencing recommendations to be submitted to judges, and follow-up Circles to monitor the progress of offenders or to continue to support victims.

Circles derive their strength from community participation in a valued-based process. Keepers as well as individuals in the circle are responsible to 'keep the values' during the circle. Keepers pass a talking piece to share speaking time in Circles. Strong community support results in lower recidivism of offenders who go through the Circles process.

Conflict Resolution

Community Circles have at times served communities by providing a forum for the discussion of difficult community issues, and helped facilitate action plans or dispute resolution. Examples of these include Circles with feuding family members to create understanding, Circles with local church members to resolve internal conflicts, and Circles with married couples to improve their communication or couples with custody/visitation issues with their children.

Circles enhance community health by teaching all participants how to resolve conflicts in a manner where communities develop collective responsibility and assume ownership for making decisions regarding their own issues.



WCCC started in 1998 and was incorporated as a non-profit organization in 2008. Please contact at communitycircles@yahoo.com or 320.260.3658

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Cottage Grove - Stillwater
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