

Every month since February 1987 the Olympia Fellowship of Reconciliation has produced one-hour TV programs on issues related to peace, social justice, economics, the environment, and nonviolence.

The Olympia FOR's program airs several times every week for the entire month on Thurston Community Television (TCTV), channel 22 for Thurston County's cable TV subscribers. You can see TCTV's schedule at www.tctv.net.

You can also watch the program described below (and more than 90 of our previous interview programs and special programs) at the Olympia FOR's website, www.olympiafor.org. Simply click the TV programs link to reach www.olympiafor.org/tv_programs.htm, scroll down, and click the program you want to watch.

Many of our website's TV program listings also include a .pdf document describing the program.

APRIL 2010

“RESTORATIVE JUSTICE AND RESTORATIVE PRACTICES”

by GLEN ANDERSON, PRODUCER AND HOST OF THIS TV SERIES

Everybody knows that our nation's criminal justice system does not work:

- Despite paying lip service to victims, the current system focuses almost entirely on offenders.
- Despite paying lip service to “corrections,” the current system does NOT correct behavior, but merely punishes it.
- Jails and prisons diminish the inmates' ability to live civilly, brutalize them, and turn them into hardened criminals.
- In the past few decades the US prison population skyrocketed, breaking up families and punishing taxpayers too.

The Olympia FOR's April 2010 TV program explores “**Restorative Justice**” – a totally fresh alternative to our criminal justice system. We also explore applying similar “**Restorative Practices**” to other aspects of our society, including schools, workplaces, and families.

The recent “lock them up and throw away the key” approach is simplistic. It imposes heavy control in the form of punishment, but it provides no human support or help to turn one's life around.

Alternatively, a permissive “social worker do-gooder” approach also is simplistic in caring about the offender without providing real accountability.

Restorative Justice provides the best of both worlds: real accountability to victims with powerful ways to encourage offenders to make positive changes.

The current criminal justice system has elbowed victims out of the way and converted the crime into a crime against “the state.” The state punishes the offender and neglects the victim.

In contrast, Restorative Justice takes good care of both. Restorative Justice can be organized in many different ways, such as **this example:**

If both the victim and offender are willing, they (and their families and supporters) can meet each other in a safe and supportive setting. The victim (and family and supporters) can explain the real effects of the crime. The offender (and family and friends) listen, understand, and gain insights. They devise some way(s) to restore the damage and create a mutually agreeable solution that can produce several dimensions of real justice.

Decades of actual experience in many parts of the world – and scientific research studies – clearly show that this works exceedingly well to reduce the likelihood that the offender will commit another crime. It also significantly reduces the victim’s fears and trauma, and it can provide personal and financial restoration for the victim.

Similar principles have been adapted to problems in schools (fights and other behavior problems, academic shortcomings, truancy, etc.) and in workplaces and other settings where conflicts and problems need to be resolved instead of merely punished. These approaches are sometimes called “Restorative Practices.”

Our guests – Paul McCold and Beth Rodman – share their extensive experience, very solid knowledge, and wise insights.

They and others in our community are urging Restorative Justice to be used locally for youths and adults. If you want to help, contact them at pmccold@aol.com or bethrodman@gmail.com

Excellent information is available from www.iirp.org, www.restorativejustice.org, and books and articles written by Howard Zehr.