

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Community Conferencing Training Registration Deadline Extended

The Monroe County Active Balanced Community Initiative will be sponsoring Community Conferencing Training on September 6, 7, and 8 at the Arthur Lesow Community Center. Community Conferencing is a process that helps neighborhoods, schools, government agencies, faith communities, organizations and families uncover their natural wisdom for responding to destructive behavior in constructive ways, and to build connections that serve the well being of all.

A Community Conference is a meeting of the community of people affected by behavior that has caused serious harm. The conference provides a forum in which those who have caused harm and those who have been harmed seek ways to repair the damage caused by the incident and to minimize further harm. All participants are given an opportunity to talk about what happened at the time, and what has happened since. The damage is generally emotional, as well as possibly physical. It is important that everyone present should have a clear understanding of the full impact of the behavior. They then decide what needs to be done to repair the damage and minimize further harm. When an agreement has been reached, it is recorded in writing, and signed by key participants, who are then given a copy of the agreement.

Community Conferencing has been successful in addressing non-violent criminal offenses as well as long-standing community conflicts. Since everyone affected by the incident is included in deciding how to repair the harm, Community Conferencing has been proven to have a high rate of success.

Community Conferencing has a definite impact on criminal justice, neighborhoods, and schools by having an immediate response to crime, it reduces recidivism, it has a community based response, offenders are held accountable for their actions, it is cost effective, offenders are

connected to a network of support, it frees up the court system to handle the serious cases it was designed for and reduces the need for costly legal representation. Community Conferencing is based in the neighborhoods it serves.

“Community Conferencing provides a way to address often-ignored, yet extremely harmful behavior, such as gossiping and bullying,” said Sandie Pierce co-coordinator for the Active Balanced Community Initiative.

Mrs. Pierce went on to say that Community Conferencing helps build responsibility for self and others, everyone who is affected is included, people are accountable to each other, and it helps reduce calls to the police freeing them up to respond to more serious calls.

Community Conferencing is an excellent concept because it allows those who have been harmed an opportunity, in a safe place, to talk about how they were affected while giving those who have caused the harm an opportunity to be accepted back into the community.

The training is open to the public and free of charge to participants. Interested individuals include community members, school staff, probation staff, and human service providers – essentially anyone who is committed to strengthening the Monroe Community by increasing the availability of restorative practices.

Training runs from 1:00 PM to 5:00 PM on September 6, and continues on September 7, from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM and September 8, from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM. Please contact Sandie Pierce or April Corie, Active Balanced Community, at 734-242-1331 extension 13, registration on deadline of August 31.

END

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