

MARCH 2023

# NEWSLETTER

FROM THE CENTER FOR COMMUNITY JUSTICE - ELKHART, INDIANA.



## IN THIS ISSUE:

Our PACT Coordinator speaks on conflict-resolution skills for our County's youth. – **PAGE 2**

Working with "In-School" Youth – Reflections and observations from our Restorative Schools Coach. – **PAGE 3**



Mr. Irwin Larrier -  
Executive Director.

## A NOTE OF THANKS...

"Every day, the Center for Community Justice staff joins others from other nonprofit and social support organizations in the "trenches." This quarterly newsletter reports on some of the stories of using restorative justice in the lives of individuals in school systems, businesses, and our communities that encourage and prepare the citizens of Elkhart to live their best lives despite some of the challenges we face. We are thankful to serve you. I am thankful for my colleagues at CCJ."



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## THE PACT WE'VE MADE...



Ms. Lartess Larry -  
PACT Coordinator.

**The Promise Academy for Conflict Transformation (PACT)** program uses restorative justice practices to empower youth to transform conflict. PACT has one month-long cohort with four sessions that teach youth to make better decisions when dealing with conflicts.

CCJ staff teaches youth conflict resolution skills to help them stay out of trouble in the future by focusing on constructive communication, perspective-taking, and non-violent communication. We teach these skills so they can use them at school, at home, and community. Life offers challenges as well as opportunities to correct negative learned behaviors. Allowing youth to make things right when they have caused harm helps them recognize their promise within themselves, empowering them to live up to their inherent promise.

One parent of a participant who completed the process stated, ***"I just want to shout out and say that even though it's only been four sessions with the group and the team, you all have truly helped Jaime. She loves the group, and I see such a difference in her, and she has a smile every time she leaves, thank you." I wish she could do more. Thank you for helping the children of Elkhart; they need you! Stay blessed, team, and keep blessing the kids in the group."***



### **"Here's what one of our PACT partners says about the decision to support PACT" -**

"Our passion at **Loader Parts Source** is creating positive solutions for change. While that is how we conduct business, we don't want it to stop there. Our leadership team searched for organizations that embrace that same passion while aligning with our core values of *"Being Committed, Leaving it all on the Field, Being Dependable, and Reaching Towards Wholeness."*

**The Pact Program at the Center for Community Justice is a perfect fit!** They are working with our youth to help them create positive solutions for change. Loader Parts Source wants to grow leaders within our company and our community. We think the Center for Community Justice is doing just that, and we are happy to be able to help support them in their mission."



Ms. Becky Snider-  
Restorative Schools Coach.

## Working with In-School Youth...

**“names have been changed in this article for privacy”**

A federal grant currently funds one full-time staff person in Elkhart Community Schools. The staff person tells a story about work with elementary-aged students. Using a restorative justice perspective in the school setting requires looking beneath the surface for what is happening.

For both boys, I have been encouraging their teachers to consider their behaviors as the communication of unmet needs. When “Carter” refuses to follow instructions, is he seeking agency and opportunities to make choices that feel like his own? Are there ways the teacher can communicate more transparently with “Elijah” to alleviate his sense of injustice?

This work is not easy, but if it means that young people’s needs are more adequately met by the school instead of more punishment, then it is worth it.

The first time I met “Carter” he told me he didn’t know why other students ever started arguments with him since he always wins them. When I probed further, he said, “When I’m ready to win, I just say mean words, so they get upset and leave me alone.”

As I’ve spent more time with Carter, I’ve observed his use of this strategy several times. Carter is notably diminutive in stature compared to his fourth-grade peers, receives special education services twice a day, struggles especially with reading and writing tasks and claims to hate school. Unsurprisingly, he reaches for unkind words to feel a sense of control. His teacher, at her wit’s end with his unpredictable obstinate, disruptive behavior, reached out to me for support.

When I met “Elijah” – another student in the same fourth-grade class – he was sitting just outside his classroom door, arms and legs pulled into his baggy T-shirt, sobbing. The teacher called to see if I could help determine why he was so upset. I sat on the floor in front of him, coached him through getting control of his breathing, and asked what had happened. Elijah told me that he had been laughing with the other students at his table group about something Carter had said, and his teacher had scolded only him and threatened punishment.

Elijah, as I’ve learned in our interactions since, is particularly bothered by injustice. He acknowledged that he understood how his laughter and that of his classmates hurt Carter, but he was deeply upset by how unfair he felt his teacher had been. I invited the teacher to join us in the hallway, and Elijah and I shared his perspective with her. She removed the threat of punishment and asked “Kaiden” to communicate more openly with her in the future.