

Peacing It Together

TRIPPED UP

by Lacey Benton

This past March, Baltimore City School Police were called to a classroom in a Baltimore City Elementary School to address an incident between 2 students, Dante and Aaron. Aaron claimed that Dante tripped him and that he got mad and threw a pair of scissors at Dante. Both boys were 10 years old. Dante was taken to the school nurse and treated for a minor puncture. Dante's mother was called and it was suggested that she take her son to the hospital to make sure he didn't need stitches. Aaron was taken into custody and transported to Baltimore City Juvenile Detention Center for processing. Aaron was charged with Common Assault. Also per the Baltimore City Public School discipline code, Aaron was placed on long-term suspension, which is 45 days.

The Facilitator's first call was to Ms. Donaldson, parent of the complainant Dante, to see if she and her son would agree to attend a community conference as a way to resolve the incident. She was informed that this would be an opportunity to handle the matter directly and that if the meeting were successful, they would not have to proceed any further into the court system. Ms. Donaldson was very open to the idea and immediately said that she did not want to press charges against the young boy. Dante also agreed to the Community Conference.

The Facilitator then contacted Ms. Wilson, who was also interested in handling the matter outside of the courts. In speaking with Aaron, it was clear that he knew he had done wrong and he stated that he would take the opportunity to apologize to Dante.

Both parents requested that the classroom teacher, Ms. Baker attend the Community Conference. She was contacted and readily agreed.

While on long-term suspension Aaron would not be allowed on school property so an alternate location needed to be found that would be amenable to all parties. After four attempts to find an available meeting space, luckily the First Unitarian Church of Baltimore opened their doors! Ms. Baker, the school teacher agreed to meet off school grounds and at 5:30 in the evening.

Aaron began by painfully recounting the incident, needing many prompts from the Facilitator to keep telling what happened next. He was unable to look up and kept his eyes averted throughout the entire conference. He described how sad he was when the police officer took him downtown and locked him in a cell. He was in the cell for 6 hours. His mother shared that "they made him take off his long underwear and then put his pants back on without his belt, like he was a criminal." Ms. Wilson stated that she is still feeling the effects of the incident and that nothing like this has ever happened to her before.

Dante related basically the same story other than indicating that he did not put his leg out to trip Aaron but that Aaron was running and tripped over Dante's foot. Dante was able to say clearly and directly to Aaron that he did not try to trip him. Later, as part of the agreement phase, Dante asked Aaron if they could be friends. Aaron said yes.

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Dear Friends



CHANGE...In our last newsletter, we talked about the Community Conferencing Center's (CCC) season of change. We made it thru and are settling in comfortably. In December 2011, we moved into the Union Mill Complex in Hampden and we love it! In June, our staff along with other organizations in the building, and building owner's Sewall Development Company celebrated the grand opening of the Union Mill Project. The evening included words from Baltimore City's Mayor, Stephanie Rawlings-Blake, Maryland Governor, Martin O'Malley and Seawall Owner, Donald Manekin who has been so great in helping us with our transition into this great new space.

Congratulations to our new Community Conferencing babies: Jennifer Will-Thapa's baby boy Liam born in October (2011) and our board president Ted Capshaw baby boy Jaxon born in May (2012). Interesting CCC fact: between board and staff children, there are 12 boys and only 2 girls. Some say there must be something in the water.

PROGRAMS...As the school year has ended and are evaluating our programs, I want to publicly say what a great job the staff has done in providing Community Conferencing & Daily Rap. As a first, we were fortunate to receive a small grant from the Mediation and Conflict Resolution Office (MACRO) to help us evaluate this year's Daily Rap program.

This spring, 3 CCC staff traveled to New York to train a group in Brooklyn in Community Conferencing and they have hit the ground facilitating. The Brooklyn Community Conferencing program will be run by Rochelle Arms at the New York Peace Institute. We wish them well and we are here to support!

This year, we worked with website developer, Akilah Jackson of Starbrite, Inc. to design a new cloud database for our program. This database not only allows the Community Conferencing Center to track its data but allows our conferencing program partners to use and track their data in the same database. This new technology will help our centers move forward with streamlined data tracking and reporting. Larell Smith, Intake Coordinator has been phenomenal making this transition happen for CCC and the other programs we work with...great job Larell!

Lauren Abramson received great news when she found out her proposal for the Rockefeller Foundation's Practitioner Writing Residency was accepted. The program sought out applicants whose work contributed to the well-being of humanity. She will be spending 4 weeks (August thru September) in ITALY writing about Community Conferencing. Great job Lauren!

THE FUTURE...My hope is that our center is able to spread this process across the country; helping other cities start Community Conferencing programs to help citizens resolve their conflicts and certain crimes peacefully. Wishing you continued peace!

Maryland Residents: Take advantage of Community Conferencing Center's
◆◆ **Community Investment Tax Credits** ◆◆
Donate a minimum of \$500 and receive 50% in Maryland Tax Credits
in addition to the regular Charitable Donation Credits
(ex: \$500 donation = \$250 Tax Credits + Regular Charitable Giving Credit)

Nicole Glass-Brice, Deputy Director



RECOGNIZING AN IMPORTANT PEACE INITIATIVE

In November (2011), the CCC recognized the work of the Extra Legalese Group, Inc. (ELG), Maryland's only nonprofit-incorporated prisoner think tank at the Jessup Correctional Institution (JCI). Lauren Abramson, CCC Executive Director, acknowledged ELG with a certificate of recognition from the Community Conferencing Center, after they were recognized as one of the state's Innovators of the Year for their Peace Initiative by *The Daily Record*.

The Peace Initiative is designed to prevent victims and victimization by working with gangs inside and outside prison. After victim rights advocate Jennifer Adkins told her story of her 14 year-old son's murder by gang members to over 200 prisoners at a JCI Peace Symposium in 2010, a dozen leaders representing 4 notorious gangs came forward and promised to push for changes like doing away with initiation rites of random violence. This led to JCI becoming one of the least violent prisons in Maryland, when for years it was labeled as the most violent. ELG's contributions to public safety are valuable assets and they want Maryland citizens to know that solutions to crimes can and are being found inside of prisons...peace comes in all forms and can be made anywhere.

**Community Conferencing
Report Card** (thru 6/30/2012)

CC = Community Conferences 

	FY12
Youth referred	969
Minority youth referred	929
Cases referred	562
Community Conferences	271
Participants in a CC	1,429
Youth in a CC	489
Minority Youth in a CC	423
% of CC's resulting in agreement	92%
% Compliance with their agreement	96%

Join us for the 5th Annual



October 5, 2012

7pm - 11pm

w/ *Peacing It Together* Awards
(Ceremony begins at 8 pm)

Casual Attire ♦ Live Raffle
DJ for Dancing

Michael's Eighth Avenue
7220 Greyburn Drive
Glen Burnie, MD 21061

Call 410.889.7400
for more information
or visit us at
communityconferencing.org

Tickets \$40 each
Tables \$350 (10 tickets)

Net proceeds benefit the CCC

COVER STORY (continued)

Both mothers expressed how frightening it was for them to hear about the incident – Ms. Donaldson by a call from the school saying her son had been hit in the face by a thrown pair of scissors; and Ms. Wilson by the police department saying that her 10 year old son had been arrested and detained for assault with a weapon. Ms. Donaldson made it very clear that she did not want to press charges and that she wanted to make sure that Aaron have whatever resources he may need to help him deal with his anger.

Ms. Baker added how important it is for her to maintain a safe environment in her classroom and that she wants both boys to at least be friendly with each other.

The Group had done a great deal of working out this conflict and finally came up with the following Community Conferencing agreement:

1. Aaron apologized to Dante and his mother and both accepted his apology.
2. There are no further issues and the boys agree to be friends.
3. Ms. Donaldson told Aaron and his mother that she is not upset with them and she told Aaron to please not be sad.
4. Ms. Donaldson invited Aaron to come hang out at her house any time.
5. Aaron agreed that he has learned lessons from this such as different ways to respond when angry, how to talk about things instead of fighting, tell a teacher as soon as you have a problem and in the future: STOP – LISTEN – THINK
6. Aaron will continue to see a counselor weekly
7. Ms. Wilson will look into getting Aaron back to his regular school.

During the Community Conferencing Follow-up phase, the Facilitator called Ms. Wilson to find out about Aaron's school placement and made sure that he was getting the help he needed. Dante was also called to make sure that he was satisfied with the results of the Community Conference.

Facilitator's Notes:

It is always refreshing to see a complainant's parent reach across the circle to support and encourage a respondent child. In this case Ms. Donaldson, the parent of the child who was hurt was more prepared to restore and ended up comforting Aaron in the circle more so than his own mother. Awww...the power of the circle.

Lacey Benton was trained in 1998 as a Volunteer Facilitator and became a part-time staffer in 2010.

The names of the participants in this real Community Conference have been changed to protect their identities.

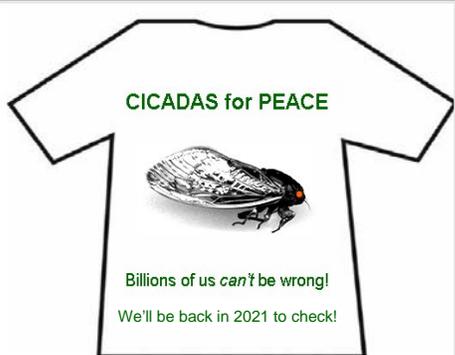


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- Follow us on Twitter: http://twitter.com/#!/peacing_it2gthr
- Follow us on Tumblr: <http://peacingit2gthr.tumblr.com/>

TRAINING & TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

A 2 1/2 day Community Conference **Facilitator Training Workshop** is offered in Baltimore, MD. Next training will be February 27 - March 2, 2013
 July 2013 (TBD)

DAILY RAP Dialogue Circle Training - call (410) 889-7400

Technical Assistance is available for programs interested in adding **Community Conferencing** to their services. Technical Assistance is also available for programs/schools who want to add **Daily Rap** to their curriculum. Contact our offices at **(410) 889-7400** or info@communityconferencing.org

All checks should be made payable to **Community Conferencing Center** (a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization).

Maryland Tax Credits
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For United Way of Central MD donations you must write in Community Conferencing Center 1500 Union Ave Ste 2700 Baltimore, MD 21211 as your designated charity.

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