



Media Release

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CERA AGM Celebrates 10th Anniversary of Community Service

Coquitlam, BC – Can people acting together make a difference in their community? Yes they can! Everyone is invited to **the CERA (Communities Embracing Restorative Action) Society AGM on Thursday, June 11 from 6:30 to 9:00 pm at the Royal Canadian Legion, 1025 Ridgeway Avenue, Coquitlam**, for food and festivities to celebrate 10 years of community service.

Focused on appreciation for the past, present and future, the evening will begin with an active presentation of how restorative principals and practices work in schools by the **Porter Street Elementary School Peace Squad led by Sharon LeClair, Social Responsibility and Healthy Living Coordinator for School District 43**. The students will show how conflict at school is resolved in a real life situation.

Next, guest speaker **Catherine Borgen, Restorative Justice Coordinator for Victim Services and Crime Prevention within the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General** will speak about the value of restorative justice. In the restorative justice community since 1999, Catherine is recognized across Canada as an expert consultant, trainer and practitioner. Some of her accomplishments include training over 1500 youth and adults in restorative justice, co-author of internationally acclaimed resource books *Conversation Peace* and *Talking Peace*, presenter of *Safe Schools: Strategies for Changing a Culture* at the 6th International Conference on Restorative Justice, and facilitator in the dialogue/film camp for the Palestinian, Israeli and Canadian film called *Peace It Together* which has become a nonprofit society of which she is now a director.

The current Board of Directors will then recognize the altruistic hard work and vision of co-founders with a special presentation. After a refreshment break, the evening will conclude with the business meeting of the AGM.

In 1998 a small group of committed citizens recognized the public desire to address youth problems. "We wanted to address youth wrongdoing by restoring relationships that reintegrate youth not shield them from the harm caused" stated driving co-founder Sandy Burpee. They understood the life-changing value of bringing youth charged with a crime together with the victim to repair the harm caused by the offence. "I believe when people involved in crimes meet each other face to face and share their stories healing happens and communities are strengthened" stated co-founder Mary O'Neill, Principal of Dr. Charles Best Secondary School. Restorative justice met their community vision. Through their tireless efforts and the essential support from the TriCity Joint Family Court and Youth Justice Committee, the municipalities of Coquitlam, Port Coquitlam and Port Moody funding and police the Fraser-Burrard Community Justice Society, now CERA, was established in 1999.

Restorative justice sees crime as a violation of people and relationships that creates obligations. It involves the parties harmed and the offenders to put things right with support for victim needs and offender responsibilities to repair the harm caused by the offence. Restorative justice encourages collaboration and reintegration to find meaningful ways to involve and respond to community bases of crime. Restorative justice builds respectful relationships for stronger communities.

CERA operates two restorative justice programs to respond to crimes committed and to prevent future criminal offences. The **Community Youth Justice Program** brings together youth charged with a criminal offence and the victims in a supportive environment with trained volunteer facilitators to share their stories in the determination of specific measures that will repair the harm caused. A 96% completion rate confirms the success of this program. The **Empowering YOUTH** program trains elementary, middle and high school students and teachers in restorative justice for the establishment of action teams to address violations that are not criminal offences. These programs instill responsibility and accountability with respect to repair harm caused by crime or conflict.

CERA cordially invites everyone to join us in celebrating the growth of restorative justice in our communities. For more information call 604.931.3165, visit www.cerasociety.org, or email info@cerasociety.org.