

Dane Co. Exec. Parisi: Dane County welcomes former chief judge to discuss restorative justice practices

Posted on Thursday, Aug 17, 2017

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The public is invited to attend a presentation on the cultural base of Circle Keeping and Restorative Justice practices, hosted by Former Chief Judge Dave Raasch, at The Urban League of Greater Madison on August 19 from 1 to 3 p.m. The event is sponsored by the Dane County Department of Human Services and will cover the Native American origins of circle keeping, how circle keeping works as a tool to resolve conflict and restore communities, and the current applications of peacemaking circles as it relates to criminal justice in the United States.

The Dane County Community Restorative Court (CRC) is modeled after the circle keeping process that Chief Judge David Raasch will discuss in his presentation. Dane County formally began CRC in the spring of 2015. The program's success led the County Executive to expand its services countywide in his 2017 budget.

"Our Community Restorative Court provides a dynamic alternative to the traditional justice system, and I am proud that we are able to spread its services to the entire county," said Dane County Executive Joe Parisi. "Respondents are able to accept responsibility for their actions, be given a second chance, and learn ways in which they can improve themselves and give back to their community."

The CRC is designed to work with young people, ages 17 to 25, who have committed a misdemeanor crime. When compared to the traditional justice system,

studies indicate that Restorative Justice processes resolve cases more quickly, reduce recidivism, generate greater feelings of fairness for both the victim and the offender, and result in a higher percentage of offenders making full restitution payments. Jonathan Scharrer, Director of the Restorative Justice Project at the University of Wisconsin Law School, has also found that Restorative Justice practices demonstrate significant cost per case savings.

“Restorative justice offers a positive way forward from a crime, both for victims and those responsible for causing harm,” said Director Jonathan Scharrer. “This process elevates the voice of victims and offers inclusionary responses and solutions that make a real difference in people’s lives and strengthens the community.”

David Raasch is a former chief judge of the Stockbridge-Munsee Band of Mohicans Tribal Court. He began his career in the justice system when he became a police officer in 1971. He then served as a court administrator for the City of Green Bay until 2004, contributing 20 years of service. He recently retired as a Tribal Project Specialist for the National Criminal Justice Training Center at Fox Valley Technical College in Appleton, WI. He is a member of the National Judicial College and the former President of the Wisconsin Tribal Judges’ Association.