

# Restorative Justice Centre

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## Deputy Chief-Justice endorses restorative justice

The Deputy-Chief Justice of South Africa, Judge Dikgang Moseneke was the guest speaker at the RJC's 5<sup>th</sup> AGM in September 2005.

Bearing greetings from the Chief Justice, Judge Moseneke congratulated the RJC on its achievements of the past 5 years.

He noted that civil society organisations often fulfil the role of pushing boundaries and challenging the way society thinks about an issue. He provided a brief historical overview of thinkers who have made a mark on the Western criminal justice system and agreed that we need to ask the question whether or not the criminal justice system in South Africa is delivering what we expect it to.

Judge Moseneke suggested that restorative justice resonates well with African traditional justice, as well as with the preamble to the country's constitution, noting that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission provided a definite context for the application of restorative justice. While acknowledging that it has some limitations when it comes to dealing with serious offences, Judge Moseneke endorsed the restorative justice approach as part of the sea change of establishing a society with new values. He declared himself willing to assist in integrating restorative justice into the country's criminal justice system.

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## The RJC, 5 years of adding value to our criminal justice system

Presentations during the AGM tracked the development of the RJC from its beginnings in the Family Group Conferencing Pilot Project of the Inter-ministerial Committee on Young People at Risk in 1996, to its registration as an NPO in 2000 and its first funded projects in the same year. From having started with 3 projects and 3 staff members at that time, the RJC now has over 10 projects and 26 full time and part-time staff members. During this period the services that we offer have been established at most of the courts in Tshwane, and the value they add has been demonstrated. The growth in the number of clients served across all projects has also increased dramatically. For the full Annual Report please visit our recently revamped web site at [www.rjc.co.za](http://www.rjc.co.za).

*(Continued on page 2.)*

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**Restorative Justice Centre**



## The RJC, 5 years of adding value to our criminal justice system *(Contd. From page 1.)*

Several stories were shared from some of the projects:

- ◆ Excerpts were read from a letter received from someone who had participated in a victim offender conference with the person serving a 14 year jail term for having killed her brother. She explained how disrespected and ignored she and her family had felt during the time of the trial. During the conference she had the opportunity of asking questions that had plagued her for years and was able to come to a point of expressing forgiveness and experiencing reconciliation. She ended her letter by saluting the RJC facilitators, thanking God for the service they had provided, saying that without it she and her family's lives would still be locked in a prison of pain and unfinished business.
- ◆ The mother of a boy who had participated in the life-skills group as a diversion option shared her experience of how she and her son had felt affirmed and supported. Despite a difficult journey, her son was now free of drugs and had broken with the friends associated with that lifestyle.
- ◆ Elements of stories from victim offender conferences held at a pre-trial and pre-sentence level, involving domestic violence and theft were shared.
- ◆ Johanna Prozesky from the National Department of Social Development complimented the RJC on the training of probation officers in restorative justice and conferencing that the Department had funded with the assistance of the Embassy of the Netherlands. She read some of the comments received from participants about how they had grown during the training. She particularly complimented the RJC on its good financial management and reporting during the project.

Mike Batley, Executive Director of the RJC, commended the Trustees and members of the Reference Board for the role they had played in establishing, supporting and guiding the organisation. He ended his report by pointing out that in the 5 years the RJC had been operating restorative justice had become accepted as having something to offer the criminal justice system by both role-players in the system as well as the media to some extent. He stressed that all players in the field need to rise to the challenge of meeting this expectation and not allowing a loss of credibility of the concept of restorative justice due to poor implementation.

**STOP PRESS: We are pleased to announce that the funding application that we submitted to the National Lottery has been approved for the 2006/2007 financial year. STOP PRESS: We are pleased to announce that the funding application that we submitted to the National Lottery has been approved for the 2006/2007 financial year. STOP**



### Victims of crime need more support

In running our intermediary services and victim-offender conferencing programs, we've identified two types of clients who have a crying need for further intervention which our current funding base cannot support. To remedy this situation, we've submitted grant applications to a number of South Africa's leading corporate foundations and grant making agencies. If our funding appeals are successful then we'll offer additional services, such as counseling, to future clients who enter these programs:



- **Intermediary Services:** When our intermediaries are called upon by the courts to support child victims who need to testify in court, most we find are girls between the ages of 5 and 15 who have been raped or sexually assaulted. During this financial year we expect to assist approximately 250 children who have been traumatized in this way.
- **Victim-Offender Conferencing Services (VOCs):** Over 50% of the cases that are referred to us by the courts contain an element of domestic violence. What our social workers are experiencing is that it takes up to 50% more time to resolve the cases involving domestic violence, than it does the others. We expect that we will facilitate around 40 victim-offender conference processes that involve domestic violence this year.

Given the fact that the vast majority of our clients are desperately poor, more often than not coming from very poor circumstances, it's unlikely that they will receive professional counseling. Consequently, these victims may never recover emotionally from what they have experienced.



If you'd like to make a donation that will specifically be used to help the clients we've described here, then please indicate this by making **women & children 1st** the reference on your deposit.  
*Account name Restorative Justice Centre, number 011550910, held at Standard Bank in Sunnyside, code 010645. (Our nonprofit organisation reference number is 008-488.)*

# Our services at a glance

## DIRECT SERVICES

Helping to heal people who've been affected by crime or conflict

### For VICTIMS

Facilitate Victim-Offender Conferences (VOC)



Intermediary Services— Support for child victims testifying in court



Drawing up crime & victim impact reports for the courts



Support program for victims of crime

### For OFFENDERS

Facilitate Victim-Offender Conferences (VOC)

Assessment of children in trouble with the law for the consideration of the courts

Diversion Program— Teaching life skills to young offenders through use of drama



Drawing up pre-trial & pre-sentence reports on adult offenders for the courts

## INDIRECT SERVICES

Promoting the concept of restorative justice

Training in restorative justice theory & practice



Awareness raising

Advocacy & lobbying



Building the restorative justice movement through — Housing the secretariat of the RJ Initiative SA Assisting other organisations

Supporting researchers in this field



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