

Detroit Mayor: “Restorative practices will make our city safe”

The Bethlehem Gadfly Police July 15, 2020

 *Latest in a series of posts about the Bethlehem Police* 

International Institute for Restorative Practices

531 Main St.

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2018 IIRP World Conference: Strengthening the spirit of community

“Restorative practices will make our city safe,” Mayor Mike Duggan declared in the opening session. “Neighborhood police officers are working seamlessly with community block clubs and Detroit Public Schools,” added Todd Bettison, Deputy Chief of Police, who’s been trained in restorative practices himself. “It’s making a huge difference. Formerly challenging kids are now leaders.”

Two school superintendents confirmed the district’s adherence to the practices. Tonya Allen, President and CEO of the Skillman Foundation, stated, “Skillman is supporting training for teachers, police, courts and neighborhood organizations.” High school sophomore and Restorative Practices Ambassador, Faith Howard, vowed, “Change starts with me!” Her schoolmate and fellow Ambassador, Jordan Cook, agreed: “I’m the one who tells kids: You can do it!”

The scope of restorative practices across the city was highlighted in numerous sessions. Michigan’s Third Judicial Circuit Court, the largest in the state, is employing the practices institution-wide, with 331 of 498 staff trained to date. With buy-in from top leadership, the initiative is

building strong staff connections and resolving workplace tensions and conflict. Staff are also using the practices with clients and family. “Since people who work at the court are part of the community, it will affect the whole community,” observed Benita Cheatom, Executive Director of Human Resources and Labor Relations.

“Restorative practices is the model; Circle Keepers are the movement,” stated Derek Blackmon, Black Family Development, Inc. Project Director for Safety Initiatives. Trained to use restorative practices in homes, families, block clubs and everywhere, Circle Keepers help resolve issues all over the city. They meet monthly with hundreds of community members, joined by neighborhood police. To fight neighborhood crime, Circle Keepers led a series of “peace marches.” They’ve persuaded 300 business owners to become “green-light” establishments, with cameras that connect to the police department. “We asked them to be part of our community,” Derek explains. “They came to our meetings and became our partners.”

Much on the program of this conference of interest.

See, for example:

Police-Community Reconciliation as a Framework to Build Trust and Increase Public Safety