

A model: Police Community Summits in Detroit

The Bethlehem Gadfly Police July 15, 2020

 Latest in a series of posts about the Bethlehem Police 

Restorative justice in Detroit

<https://www.metrotimes.com/detroit/restorative-justice-in-detroit/Content?oid=9697360>

International Institute for Restorative Practices

531 Main St.

from Larry Gabriel, “Restorative justice in Detroit.” Detroit Metro Times, February 28, 2018.

There are a lot of things going on in Detroit aimed at changing the status quo, fixing things up and all that. One of the less visible efforts that could make the biggest difference is fixing people and their relationships through restorative practices.

This isn't a headline-grabbing effort. Most of the headlines are grabbed by the things that show that we need restorative practices. When there's a shooting or a fight, that's news. When people sit down and discuss their issues and come to an agreement... well, that's pretty boring. So it would be the goal of Henry McClendon Jr., Michigan regional representative of the International Institute for Restorative Practices [**headquarters Bethlehem**], to bore you out of your mind at news time.

“More people are embracing it now,” says McClendon, who works with schools, Detroit Police and the organization Black Family Development, among others.

Detroit Police seem to be at least giving it a hug — and not one of those quickie bro hugs. He's been doing a series of Police Community

Summits, so far in the 5th, 7th and 10th precincts. These six-hour sessions seem to be sincere efforts. They started in the 5th and Police Chief James Craig was impressed enough that he ordered that all precincts participate in them. A fifth summit will take place early in March.

“The concept is to give a voice to the citizens who may or may not have good feelings about police officers,” says Commander Eric Ewing of the 5th Precinct. “It’s a two-pronged approach that gives an opportunity to see what the other is going through. In the end we get a better working relationship between officers and the community based on a better understanding.”

One part of the practice is for police in plainclothes and community members to socialize together at the beginning of the summit without identifying the officers. The uniform barrier is removed and citizens can get to know them with fewer preconceived notions. Early in the six-hour summit the officers are identified.

“Once we get into it, citizens are shocked to see who the officers are,” says Ewing.

A better understanding is what we all need around here. And around here could be anywhere from your block, to southeast Michigan, to the United States, to the entire planet. Better understanding might be the key to a lot of things. In that spirit the IIRP World Conference, Strengthening the Spirit of Community, will take place in Detroit in October 24 to 26.

Goals of restorative practices include reducing crime, violence, and bullying, improving human behavior, strengthening civil society, repairing harm, and more. Restorative justice, which some folks may have heard about, is considered a subset of restorative practices.