**Using Circles for Motivation and Community Building**

6th International Conference on Conflict Resolution Education:

Building Cultures: Education for Global Citizenship and Civic Engagement

June 2013

 

*“…conversations about the values that represent our ‘best self’ need to happen over and over again in many contexts. These values serving as the foundation of our lives function like the roots of a tree. They need to be fed and watered regularly.”*

 *Kay Pranis, from the forward to Building a Home for the Heart*

Circle Basics:

* Keeper Role: as equal participant, not providing answers but highlighting words of wisdom from the group
* Talking Piece: represents theme, for example: Wisdom – compass, Courage – photographs of lightning storms
* Centerpiece: Respect – Basket of shells, Wisdom – maps and foreign collected items
* Opening – a reading, comment
* Rounds – posing questions for the group
* Closing – summary comment and a reading
* Guidelines –sometimes introduced up front in the circle discussion as a means of reaching agreement, sometimes regarding confidentiality

Feedback from Homeless Center Coordinators:

“They helped us build a sense of community based on shared values. The circles taught clients and staff that each individual in the group possesses a great deal of wisdom and that we can all grow if individuals share their experiences, while the rest of us take the time to listen to the person who is speaking. The circles also gave participants the opportunity to reflect on their values and how they affect their daily lives. After each session, participants left knowing that they had been heard, and therefore valued by the group. This is a huge benefit of the circle process.”

*My Sister’s Place Women’s Center*

“It allows each person to be heard without being interrupted or challenged. In daily life I think it’s rare to have this opportunity and I think it’s a cathartic experience.”

*Paul’s Place*

Resources:

* *Building a Home for the Heart: Using Metaphors in Value-Centered Circles* by Patricia Thalhuber, B.V. M. and Susan Thompson
* http://just-circles.com/sample-page-2/what-we-believe-to-be-true
* Circle in the Square by Nancy Riestenberg