



Restorative Justice Project Maine
ANNUAL REPORT

2021

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Carla P. White DESIGNER

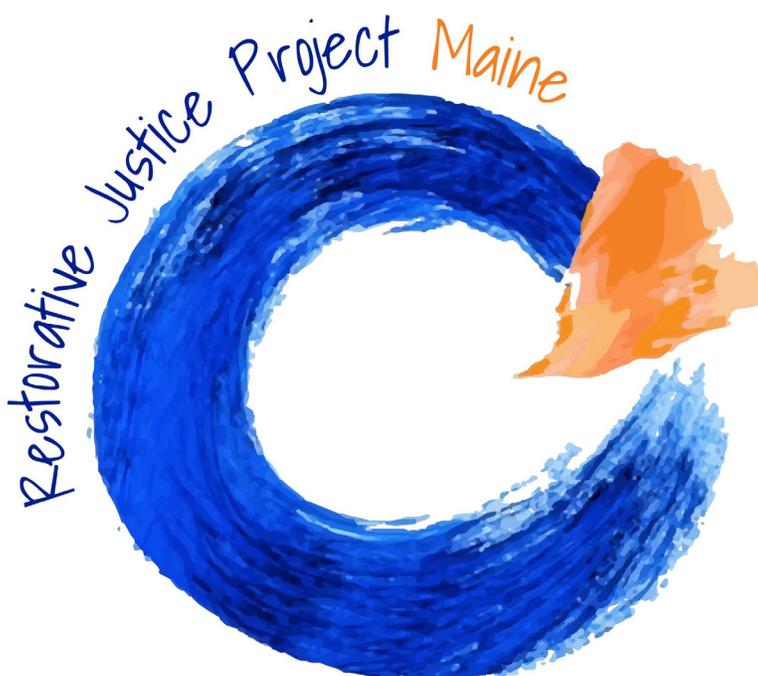
Special thanks to Louise Marks
for the use of her wonderful
artwork in this report.

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR



October 2021

GREETINGS,

June 30, 2021 marked the 18th year of operations from the founding of The Restorative Justice Project Maine (originally, The Restorative Justice Project of The Midcoast) in 2003. It has been a terrific ride from the beginning. Starting with involvement with inmates at the Waldo County Jail, and the Troy Howard Middle School in Belfast, RJPM is now active principally in 4 counties of Maine — Waldo, Knox, Lincoln and Sagadahoc. And, it is collaborating with other restorative practices organizations throughout Maine. I am proud to serve as Board Chair of this truly effective organization.

2021 tested RJPM's sustainability. The COVID pandemic, now all too familiar to all of us, presented a challenge like none heretofore. RJPM is an organization that is wholly involved in working directly with people in its programs to counsel youth, adults and work with other organizations using restorative practices. We simply had to re-invent our communication practices using Zoom, and other less personal direct interactions. I can confidently say that we have successfully adjusted to this new reality, which probably will be with us for some time. At this same time, RJPM has expanded internally and externally to meet its mission. We are on very positive footing in spite of this year's challenges. Our future is bright.

Like any non-profit founded on lofty principles, RJPM experiences the challenge

to establish and sustain a strong, effective organization. When Kathy Durgin-Leighton joined us in early 2020 as Executive Director, this challenge truly became achievable. Having limited knowledge of restorative principles and practices, Kathy jumped in with both feet. Her past experience with non-profit organizations, and her fabulous leadership skills have given RJPM great organizational strength to meet our future. Kathy has embraced the value of restorative practices. She is a true champion of our cause. Through her leadership, RJPM has expanded and diversified our Board of Directors, now 12 members, representing our four principal counties of operation. Our Board of Directors is an active "working" Board serving on internal committees ranging from financial to program development. We are well organized to move forward in achieving continuing success.

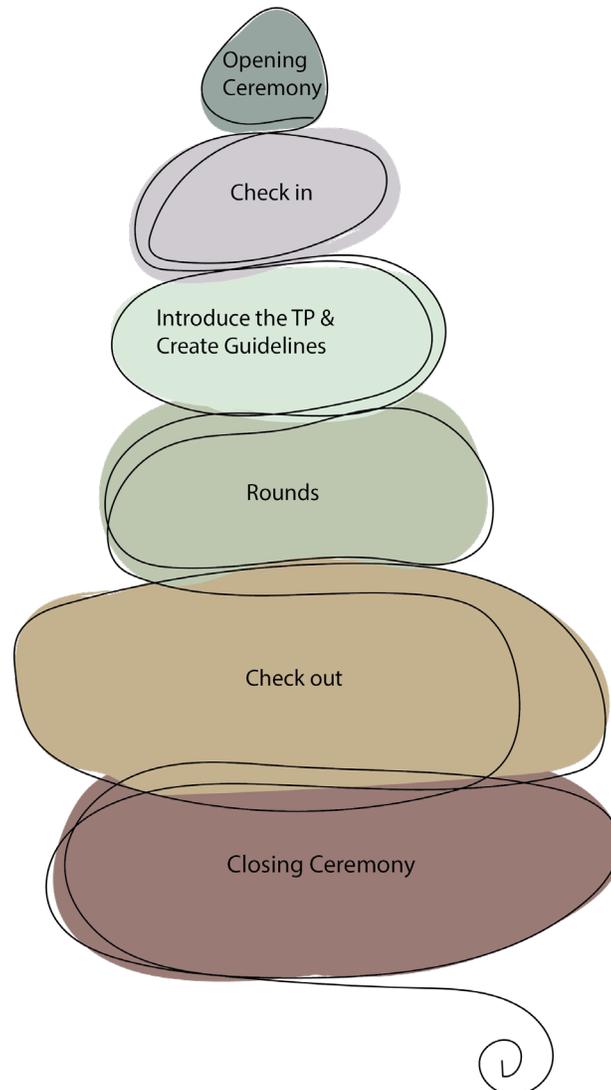
At year end June 30th, RJPM had 16 juvenile and 12 adult active counseling cases in motion. Our work with schools to introduce restorative practices in academic and disciplinary matters has brought RJPM to more schools, including a well-regarded private college in Maine. Our newly formed legislative committee has been actively engaged this year in working with our State and local legislators on involving restorative practices in bills and policies. Most recently, RJPM has been invited to work with the Permanent Commission on The Status of Racial,

Indigenous and Maine Tribal Populations to examine restorative justice, as legislated by LD 1226 passed this year. And, 2020 began the implementation of 4 Community Justice Centers, made possible through a grant from the U.S. Department of Justice Office of Justice Programs, that will provide better, long lasting responses to the systemic issues causing harm, often criminal, in our rural Maine communities.

These are but a few of our successes in 2020-21. They come as a result of our passionate 18 year history building a strong, highly functioning organization. However, I would be remiss to not point out that RJPM must be constantly attentive to our limited resources, and external forces beyond our control that hinder our positive forward momentum. Money is just one issue among many that we must, and will manage carefully. Another involves the political and social priorities at any given moment. While I recognize that we need better understanding of the values of restorative practices in improving our society, I think we can all recognize that criminal justice reform throughout the United States is being championed by our leaders and doers. These winds can change quickly in our fast paced world. We must stay actively engaged in integrating our cause — restorative practices — more deeply in our societal norms.

Thank you for listening to my thoughts, And more importantly, thank you for championing our efforts, however that works for you.

Be well,
Jack Williams BOARD CHAIR



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT



This past year has been a year like no other.

When I joined Restorative Justice Project Maine as its Executive Director in February 2020, the pandemic was just four weeks away. The presence of Covid 19 has challenged the way we work and has brought opportunities as well. Like most organizations, we've used on-line tools to hold virtual gatherings, training, and circle keeping. This gave us the opportunity to reach more people without the transportation challenges of the large geographical area we serve. Using on-line tools, our staff met more frequently and formed teams that improved our operational procedures and decision-making processes. We came together during these challenging times, celebrated milestones, welcomed the birth of babies, and grieved the loss of loved ones. We said goodbye to some staff and welcomed others. As a staff we built new relationships and rebuilt old ones to be better prepared to meet the challenges of the upcoming year.

The movement for accountability within police departments in the treatment of people of color and the Black Lives Matter Movement is changing the way we do our work. There is extensive evidence that people of color are treated more harshly than whites in the criminal justice system. They are more likely to be stopped by police, searched, ticketed, arrested, charged, and convicted; and when convicted, face longer sentences. We have made a commitment to fight for race equity in our work with the criminal justice system and other systems. As a starting point, we vowed to be better listeners and to engage in conversations about racial disparity and inequities. Over the course of four evenings, we hosted conversations with over thirty community members on race and the impact of bias and racial injustice in Maine. We formed a Race Equity Committee made up of staff, board members, and community members. We hired a group of specialists in diversity, equity, and inclusion (Global Equity Collective) to help us audit our policies, procedures, hiring practices, and programs. We joined with other Restorative Justice organizations across the state, in a working group that liaises with and supports the objectives of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Racial, Indigenous, and Tribal Population; that work will further restorative practices in Maine while addressing the inequities that exist. More needs to be done. We are committed to doing the work necessary for healing and helping communities to address conflict and foster resilient communities.

Conflict offers an opportunity to build and rebuild relationships in the community. This is a guiding principle of Restorative Justice Project Maine. We believe that conflict is inevitable. How we respond to conflict and harm is at the center of everything that we do. The year has brought us conflict and challenges like no other and throughout it all, we have responded by building and rebuilding relationships.

We look to the coming year with great anticipation. As we move toward establishing Community Justice Centers in Waldo, Knox, Lincoln, and Sagadahoc counties we look forward to working with our partners, including our friends in law enforcement and at the Cutler Institute. The challenges will continue. We will meet them together — with community members, volunteers, donors — knowing that working together will bring us closer to an equitable justice system where transformative change is a real possibility.

Kathy Durgin-Leighton EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



REPORTS

HARM REPAIR

GETTING TO KNOW TRAINING & CAPACITY BUILDING

LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE REPORT

BYRNES CRIMINAL JUSTICE INNOVATION GRANT

COMMUNITY RESOLUTION PROGRAM REPORT

Facilitating a community response to conflict and harm is central to the work of RJP Maine. This year, our harm repair team had to be extra-diligent about outreach, coordination and facilitation work in light of the challenges to in-person gathering presented by the Covid-19 pandemic. Like so many organizations, the majority of our convening moved to an on-line format; when weather allowed, we were pleased to meet outdoors.

Across the geographic area from Bar Harbor to Bath — Hancock, Waldo, Knox, Lincoln and Sagadahoc Counties — we received referrals from law enforcement, defense attorneys, the District Attorney’s office, the Department of Corrections, community members, and from individuals themselves who have either been harmed or caused harm. Circle participants included local shopkeepers, social workers, educators, members of local faith communities, law enforcement, coaches, extended family, as well as the person(s) who caused harm and the person(s) harmed. Circles often yield broad benefits for all the individuals that participate in them. The harm repair process builds and strengthens relationships among these community members and across social groups, organizations and disciplines.

92% of circle participants indicated that they thought the process was fair and that they would recommend it to others.

90% of people who had been harmed indicated that the restorative justice process met their needs.

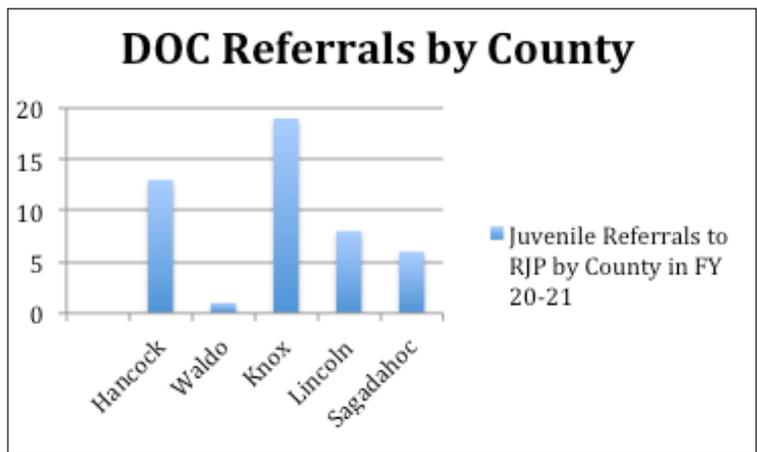
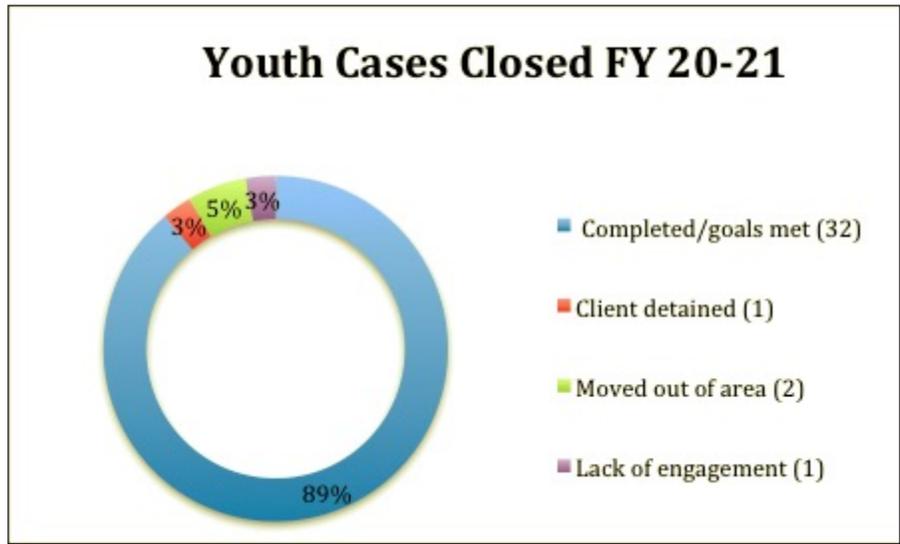
In some circles, the process deepens the relationship that a teen may already have with an advocate or a support network. In others, the voice of a stranger in the circle can help an individual to experience the compassion strangers in their community can offer, or hear the voices of those who also have made mistakes and encountered challenges in their own journey. The key messages: Reach out for help. Others are here to offer a hand along the way. You don’t have to go it alone. Repairing harm is hard, but it is possible and worthwhile.

Overall, 112¹ circles were convened for the purpose of addressing harm that ranged from shoplifting, to vandalism, burglary, assault, possession of a firearm, arson and theft.

We worked with 53 youth, ages 10 – 17; youth working on harm repair were connected with community volunteers whose role is to provide support and accountability in completing their reparative agreements.

17 youth referrals were actively underway at the end of the fiscal year and carried into FY 21-22.

¹ This includes opening circles, support or check-in circles and closing circles



LEAD — Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion

This innovative pilot effort was launched in the fall of 2020 in collaboration with the Waldo and Knox County Sheriff's Offices and targeted case management provided by the Health Equity Alliance. 28 officers were oriented to new deflection / diversion policy and procedure. Five adults and seven youth were referred to the Community Resolution Program through the LEAD initiative in lieu of summons or arrest. We have more learning and collaboration ahead of us, and we are excited to offer opportunities for citizens to address and resolve their concerns without the need of criminal charges. We hope to make LEAD available across the region over time!

ADULT REFERRALS BY SOURCE	REFERRAL VOLUME
Waldo Court	8
Waldo LEAD	3
Waldo Community	2
Waldo Inquiries	3
Knox Court	3
Knox LEAD	2
Knox Community	3
Knox Inquiries	4
Other Inquiries	4

Adult Community Harm Repair work experienced a sharp decline in referrals, presumably due to court shut-downs and the associate back-log upon reopening, as well as prolonged restrictions limiting law enforcement response to non-critical calls.

32 Community Volunteer Facilitators donated over 1200 hours preparing for, facilitating and wrapping up harm repair processes with juveniles or adults who caused harm, those they harmed, and their family and community members.

In one recent circle, a parent told us *"This has been meaningful to me, more than words can express. I think I've grown from this, maybe more than my child has."* The harmed party let us know how much they had needed the process for their own understanding and healing. And the youth's reflection upon closing the circle and looking ahead to a new school year: *"I feel like a whole new person."*

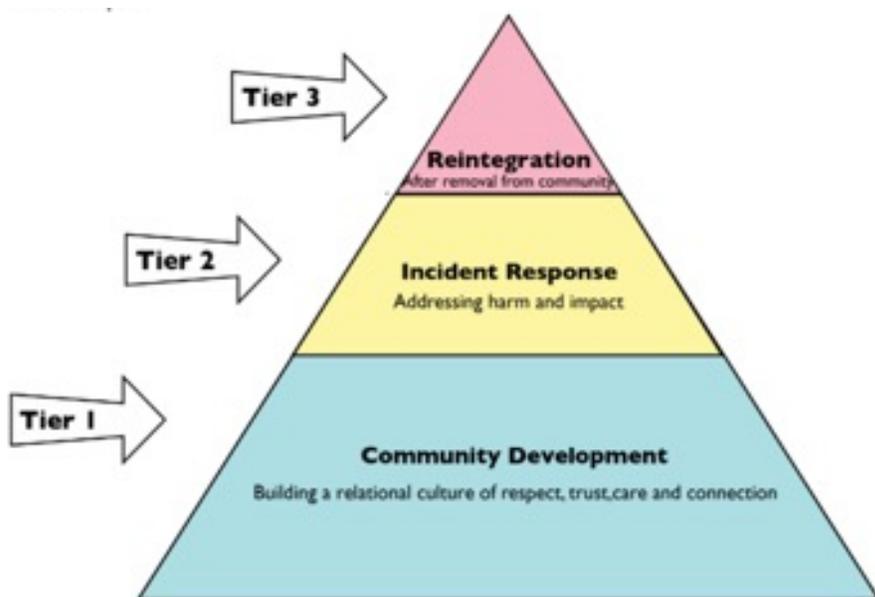
Often, there is no one eureka moment in the harm repair journey: Change and growth come from the steady support and accountability over time from folks who believe that healing and repair is possible and necessary to our very humanity and that accountability — paired with support — is the only way to get there.

WHAT ARE THE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE TRAINING & CAPACITY BUILDING (TCB) TEAM?

The TCB Team plays a dual role in the organization. We build internal capacity by helping staff, board, and volunteers to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to deliver our programs. We build external capacity in the community, helping in schools, incarceration facilities, and other community settings to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to support *a range of restorative practices* in the broader community.

WHAT IS THE RANGE OF RESTORATIVE PRACTICES?

Contemporary restorative practices have broad application; leaders in the restorative justice (RJ) field note that restorative practices should not be limited to a response to harm. RJP's approach invites communities and organizations to consider restorative approaches in three contexts: 1) community development, 2) incident response, and 3) reintegration. We help organizations and individuals to use restorative practices in each of those three contexts. At the broadest level, restorative practices can build positive community environments so that, when harm occurs, there is *something to restore back to*.



HOW DO WE HELP INSTITUTIONS TO BUILD CAPACITY TO USE RESTORATIVE PRACTICES THEMSELVES?

In partnering with any institution or community organization, the mission of the TCB Team is to help them to integrate and sustain restorative practices. Our approach, adapted from the work of the National Association of Community and Restorative Justice on school-based culture change, supports organizational and community cultures in which responses to harm can be restorative rather than punitive. We help institutions to create leadership teams and provide training, coaching, and self-assessment. While each partner relationship is unique, in-common structural pieces enable organizations across the Midcoast to use shared language and similar implementation approaches so that they can support one another in building a restorative culture.

WHAT SORTS OF TRAINING AND COACHING DO WE OFFER TO INSTITUTIONAL LEADERSHIP TEAMS?

Our Foundations training helps leadership teams to learn about the range of restorative practices. Those who want to extend their learning can attend two additional training segments: Restorative Mindset Coaching and Community Building Circle coaching. Our work with partners is comprised of four steps:

Step 1: Assess current culture and skills

Step 2: Engage and provide training to the leadership team

Step 3: Support skills practice with fidelity to restorative principles

Step 4: Deepen the skills of leadership teams through additional training and coaching

Since resources are not always available for ongoing outside training, we support learning among staff by offering training content and support during professional development sessions. Our goal is to help leadership teams to be in-house sources of knowledge and skills.

WHAT IS OUR ROLE SPECIFICALLY IN SCHOOLS?

We help schools to develop leadership teams that attend Foundations and other training to build knowledge and skills, and we provide on the ground support. We recommend that leadership teams are made up of at least two teachers, one administrator with decision making power, members of the support staff community (counselors, ed techs, bus drivers, etc.), parents and youth. The restorative principle of “nothing about us without us” is important in our school-wide implementation approach. Schools often appreciate the leadership team approach because it affords them the opportunity to phase in restorative practices over time. RJP Maine encourages school leadership teams to take a full year to engage with restorative practices, so they can support school-wide roll out of practices as early as year two of partnership.

WHAT IS OUR ROLE AT THE MIDCOAST REGIONAL REENTRY CENTER?

Our work with reentry settings is similar to that in schools and other institutions. Once leadership team members have participated in training, we work collaboratively with the team to determine the ways in which restorative practices can thrive in a reentry setting. At the Midcoast Regional Reentry Center, we work with four committees that, as a whole, make up the restorative practices leadership team. Each committee works on how restorative practices can be used within their setting. For example, the community building committee plans proactive community building circles and events that help residents and staff feel like they belong and foster a sense of community.



GETTING TO KNOW TRAINING & CAPACITY BUILDING

HOW MUCH DID WE DO?

- *Five trainings were held (42 hours each)*
- *140 people were trained*
- *17 institutions supported post training activities, including 17 schools, social services organizations, and incarceration facilities*

HOW WELL DID WE DO IT?

People who participated in our training participated in the following post training activities:

- *817 community building circles, including 575 at RSU71*
- *1090 responsive restorative experiences, including 452 at RSU71*

IS ANYONE BETTER OFF?

In schools

- After a team of 13 school staff attended Foundations training, they introduced restorative practices to all first year students and invited them to call on them for more information on restorative justice if and when they face challenges in the community...their students report feeling supported and have options in the face of conflict.
- A middle school is holding weekly community building circles for all youth to increase belonging and connection...youth report feeling more connected to one another and their teachers.

On college campus

- A leadership team is offering weekly LGBTQ+ affinity group circles so historically marginalized students can talk about their experiences and find peer support for belonging in community...these circles are among the most well attended offerings on campus and are named as being one of the most supportive spaces on campus.

At home

- During the course of this year's training, we again learned how learning about restorative practices has enhanced participants' communication and connection with family members. Some examples:
 - Using skills learned in training to navigate conflict and deepen a participant's connection with their daughter during an important milestone in their life
 - Using a circle to bring family together to grieve and process the death of a family member
 - Facilitating a circle to navigate disputes among children, and having children ask for circles to address challenges

At work

- 100% of Foundations training participants shared that their experience in training impacted their personal or professional relationships this year.

The Maine Legislature received a healthy dose of Restorative Justice during the session that ended in June. RJP Maine's 10-member Legislative Committee had a leading role as several bills that promote the use of restorative justice throughout Maine were drafted, heard by committees and signed by the Governor. The highlights were these:

- For the first time the independent organizations that employ Restorative Justice in Maine came together as a working group/coalition in support of RJ legislation. The working group has met regularly since spring and includes representatives of RJPM, the Restorative Justice Institute, Downeast RJ, Maine Youth Court, Aroostook County Restorative Practices and others. Together, the members testified for several bills that became law and will enhance the future use of restorative practices in Maine.
- The RJPM Legislative Committee developed a priority system for reviewing the 1,700 bills considered by the Legislature in 2021. The bills we deemed a high priority were parceled out to committee members to research and prepare supporting testimony, either written or delivered to committees via Zoom. More than half of the bills we supported were passed by the Legislature.
- Members of the RJ working group were selected to work with the Permanent Commission on the Status of Racial, Indigenous and Maine Tribal Populations on recommendations for expanding RJ. The commission is chaired by Rep. Rachel Talbot Ross of Portland, who is a strong supporter of our work and was a valuable mentor for our promotional efforts. The commission expects to file pro-RJ legislation by January.
- Among the bills we supported were: funding for the Permanent Commission to continue its work on researching and promoting solutions to the disparities within Maine's population groups, including the use of RJ; banning questions about criminal history on employment applications' and expanded substance use disorder programming for those incarcerated. All those bills passed.

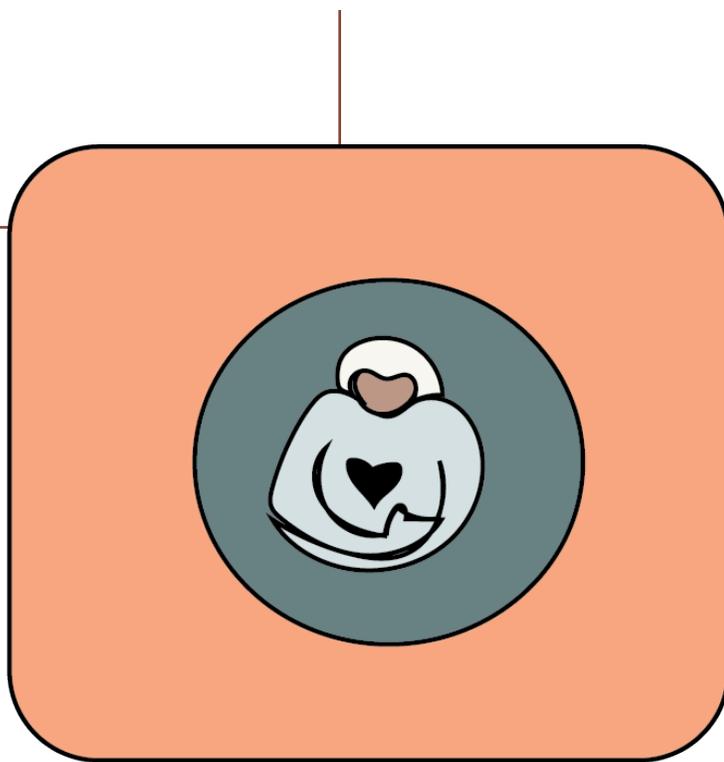
Both the Legislative Committee and the working group of RJ organizations are looking forward to an increased presence in Augusta when the Legislature reconvenes in January. The committee's current members are **Jay Davis, Chair, Jack Williams, Kathy Durgin-Leighton, Tim Hughes, Bob Gallo, Sarah Mattox, Margaret Micolichek, Art Jones, Dottie Odell, and Leslie Ross.**

BYRNES CRIMINAL JUSTICE INNOVATION GRANT

The current justice system based on punishment doesn't work. We see too many people cycling in and out of the system without hope for a better future. When harmers, those who were harmed, and community members come together to discuss what took place and how the harm can be repaired, it creates accountability and the opportunity for transformative change. This is the driving force behind the formation of our Community Justice Centers largely funded by our first multi-year federal grant awarded by the Department of Justice's Byrnes Criminal Justice Innovation grant in 2019. The grant covers the counties of Waldo, Knox, Lincoln, and Sagadahoc, all within Prosecutorial District 6.

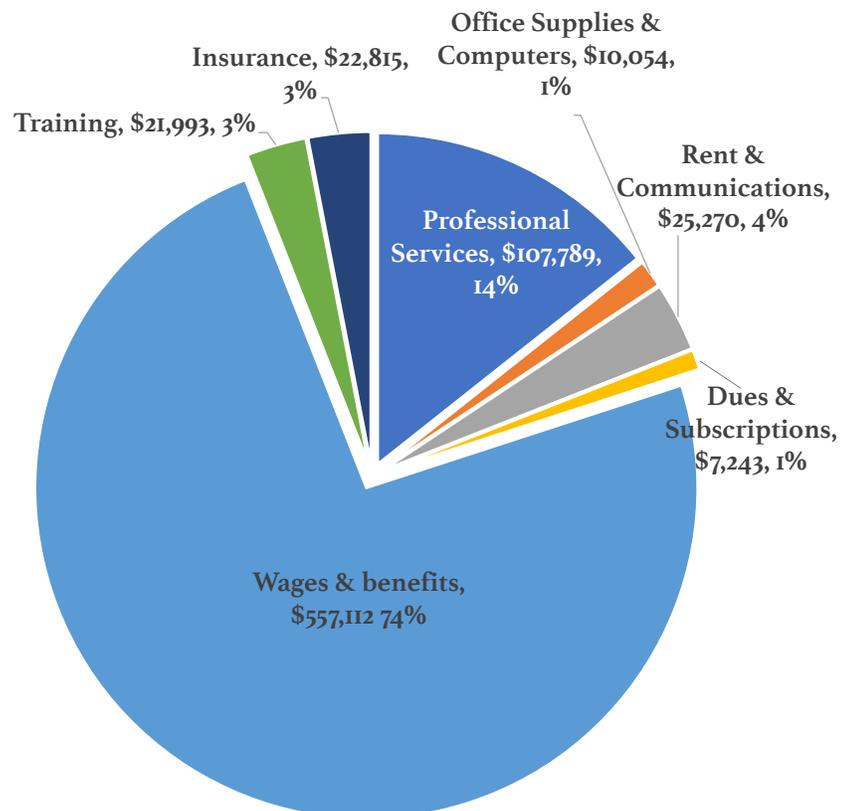
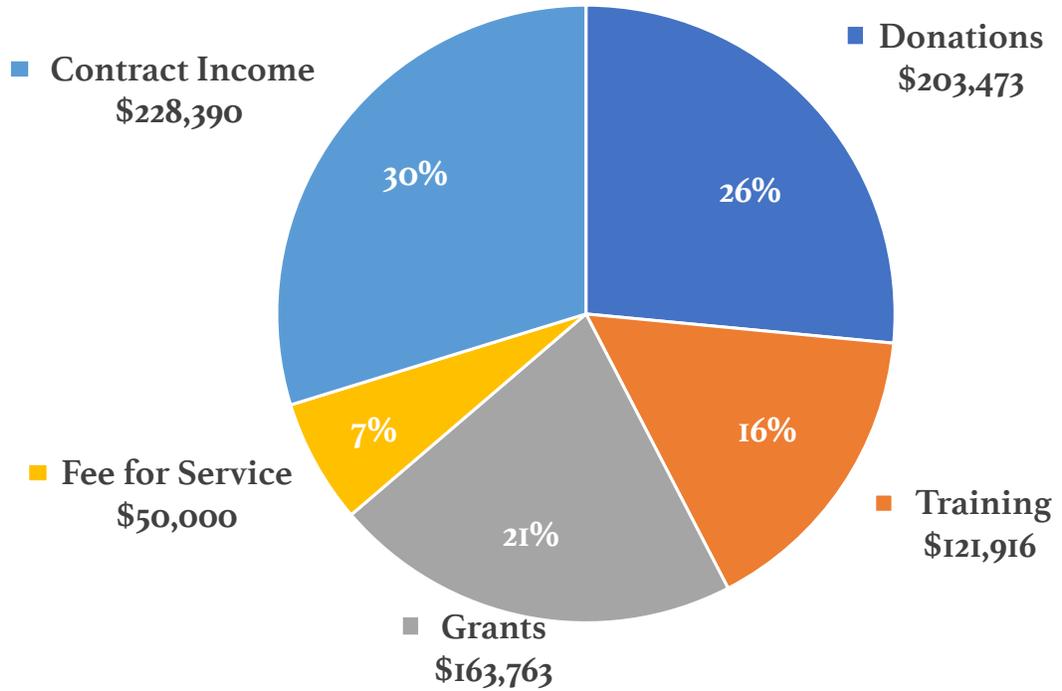
This past year has been a planning year to prepare for the implementation phase beginning in late 2021. A team of advisors regularly met over the course of the year to analyze data provided by our research partners at the University of Southern Maine's Cutler Institute. Using the data provided, this 9-member team, consisting of Sheriffs from the four counties, the District Attorney's office, and community members decided to focus its activities on reducing system involvement for people between the ages of 18 – 25 years, and particularly those who have been involved with the criminal justice system one or more times. Strategies on how best to achieve this goal will be decided at the community level by local Steering Teams.

After months of meetings and planning, the Implementation Plan was submitted to the Department of Justice and enthusiastically approved in June 2021. We are pleased to announce that our first Community Justice Center will be established in Knox County by early 2022.



REVENUE STREAMS

\$767,542



EXPENSES

\$752,276



DONORS JULY 1, 2020 — JUNE 30, 2021

We are grateful for the support from the following individuals, businesses, and organizations who make our work possible.

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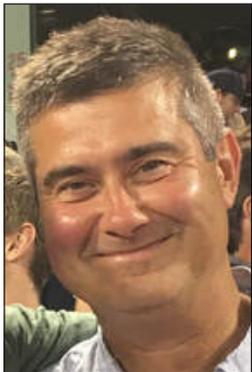
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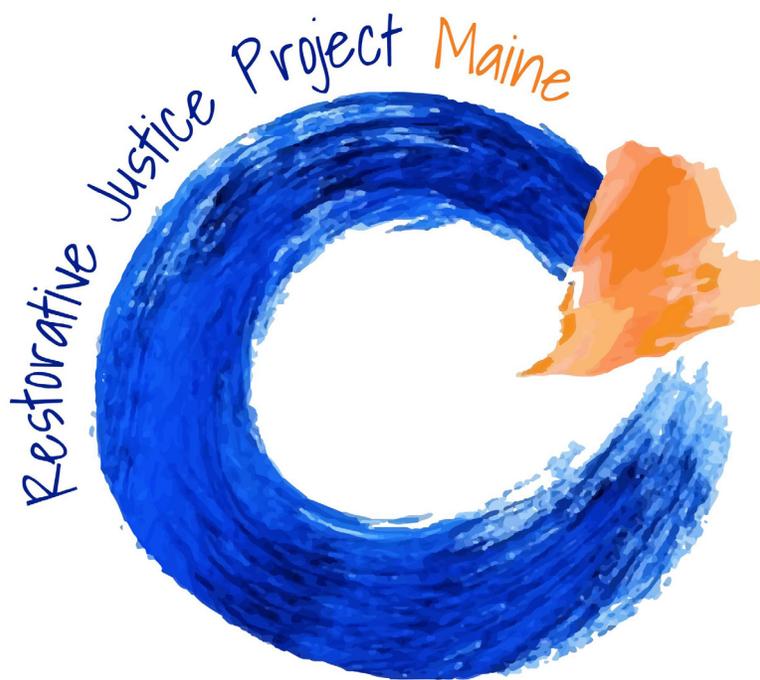
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