

## REPORT TO CRCMC BOARD: TAKING A CLOSER LOOK AT CRCMC

Over the past few months, as the volunteer representative, I was able to take a closer look at CRCMC. During that time, the following question came to me: Is it better to dig deep or to dig wide?

After attending CRCMC volunteer, circle, and Board meetings, the first thing I noticed is that the volunteers, staff, and Board members are extremely talented and committed to their work. When I attended a Board meeting, the secretary was meticulously taking notes, the treasurer's report was extremely thorough and the group was willing to learn and use the Dynamic Governance process. It also became apparent that a few Board members, volunteers and staff dug deep to make the Gala a wonderful success.

Outreach is of significant concern to the Board and they have begun to specifically address that issue. However, I believe the initial plan seemed to focus only on the mediation program because it did not include the outreach that has been done by the Youth Restorative program. Staff has done outreach to numerous schools and has connections to the Housing Opportunity Commission (HOC) community. The outreach plan did not directly address a way to support the work that has already been done by the Youth program. At the Board level, they may need to clarify whether they are addressing the need of one program or if they are taking into account all of the various programs that have been taken on by CRCMC.

Since CRCMC is ten years old, it may want to gain clarity about what CRCMC is doing and how it is doing it. It may need to dig a little deeper before it takes on new projects. When Regina Benjamin and I began to train as trainers, we realized that very little had been written down. We are currently preparing a resource manual for future trainers. My understanding is that Carlton is also preparing a procedural manual for the Reentry Program for future AmeriCorp volunteers. Often times, much is lost when the AmeriCorp volunteer leaves because they do not write anything down. When Carlton came in there was little documentation on the Reentry program. I would like to recommend that each AmeriCorp volunteer prepare a procedural manual to include in detail what each one has done, contacts made, processes followed and best practices. In this way, the next AmeriCorp volunteer won't make the same mistakes and have to go through the same trial and error as the previous AmeriCorp volunteer. We want to stabilize the knowledge gained and maintained. Then each program will be more efficient, effective and impactful.

In the circle meetings, some of the staff have indicated that they are feeling overwhelmed with work and there is concern about burn out. Using the Dynamic Governance process, they have begun to address that issue. Time was spent allowing staff to specifically state what the concerns were and of course were written down. Then, we brainstormed on some possible solutions. One idea was to use volunteers more effectively. Perhaps a couple of volunteers could be responsible for keeping in

contact with the volunteers and figuring out ways for volunteers to feel connected, appreciated and recognized. Additionally, they could find different ways to utilize the talents of volunteers to support the current programs.

I have also observed that additional support staff is needed to meet the aims of the programs. Staff is overwhelmed with their many duties. I would recommend additional grant writing training so that CRCMC can be more successful to find additional funding to support the current programs and to meet the goals and aims of the Board.

Carolyn has a pressing workload. She may want to consider taking Executive Director Training or Non-Profit Leadership Training so that she can ensure she is spending her time in the best way to help the organization. Other things may be lost because she is doing grant writing.

Volunteer mediators have expressed that they have found the refresher trainings on strategic listening, brainstorming and agreement writing, etc. to be very helpful. It's also another way for them to network with other mediators. Additionally, one mediator specifically stated that Rick and Carolyn have always been good at getting back to him and explaining things when needed. As far as being notified about mediations, there is not much advance notice, as some mediators would like. Sometimes arrangements are hurried and last minute. Sometimes the information about the observers or other information is not accurate. At the same time, there have been some sensitive issues on a few cases and those have been handled with care. One mediator asked that a general reminder be sent to mediators to arrive 30 minutes before the mediation is to begin. She has experienced some mediators rushing in a couple minutes before the participants arrive

As a volunteer of CRCMC, I would like to extend my gratitude for providing me the opportunity to mediate, facilitate dialogue circles, conduct and observe community conferences and train as a trainer. You have definitely provided me with new opportunities and experiences that have been challenging and rewarding.

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