

Expanding peace program moves into new home (2006)

Pierrette J. Shields

The Daily Times-Call LONGMONT — The stencils of trees and butterflies will remain on the walls of Teaching Peace's new home.

The images adorning the inside of the historic house at 333 Terry St. strike a tranquil tone, and that's perfect for what the Longmont-based nonprofit is trying to accomplish.

Teaching Peace, which is dedicated to community dispute resolution and restorative justice, is moving into what used to be the home of Books for the Whole Child to expand its services and operations.

The group isn't quite moved in yet, but already about a dozen mismatched chairs are arranged in a circle, ready for the next peace-making session.

Beverly Title, one of the nonprofit's founders and now a member of the Teaching Peace board of directors, said keeping the painted stencils on the walls will pay homage to the former tenant.

Title said she is excited that the organization she founded in 1994 with Lana Leonard — now headed by Title's daughter, Summer Deaton — has room to grow.

On Wednesday, she opened a closet door to reveal boxes stacked floor to ceiling with books on mediation, facilitation, bullying prevention and other topics.

"This is going to be a library and resource room, but we have no bookcases," she said, adding that IBM is donating metal shelving to hold the library until wooden cases can be found. "There are a lot of materials that are not getting the level of use that they should, and we just wanted to make it available to the community."

Teaching Peace provides the city with its Longmont Community Justice Program, which provides facilitated sessions that allow people in conflict to work out differences. Police can choose to refer some offenders to the program instead of ticketing them, judges may offer it as an alternative to sentencing, and community members can request the service privately without a referral.

According to statistics covering the Teaching Peace's work from 2002 through 2004, 94 percent of offenders in the program either completed or are completing reparation agreements for their misdeeds, and 88 percent of those who completed agreements were not arrested by Longmont police within the following year.

Teaching Peace ran the Community Justice Program from a small office at the Longmont Safety and Justice Center. But other services offered through the nonprofit — such as consulting or school-based peacemaking programs — could not use the city-

funded space, Title said. She and others worked from home offices, cars, church meeting rooms and whatever other space could be reserved.

With the new facility, Teaching Peace will have regular meeting space and room for program coordination.

The organization is researching ways to use restorative justice practices in domestic violence and underage drinking cases in the community. Already, the services include programs such as: a group conferencing model; restorative circle models used to tackle crime in schools; “peacemaking circles” that address ongoing conflicts; the Shoplifting Solutions Workshop, which encourages decision-making skills; and workplace conflict resolution and facilitation.

Teaching Peace is leasing the house on Terry Street. Title said she hopes residents will come to seek resources from the program.

For now, there are no scheduled office hours, but Title said appointments are available by calling 303-776-1527.

More information is available online at www.lcjp.org and www.teachingpeace.org.

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