

Grant Update

A Summary of Grant Activity

Governor's Crime Commission

NC Criminal Justice Analysis Center

A Call to Men

The Problem

Jackson County is a rural western North Carolina community with a population of 38,530 (North Carolina Demographers Office, July 2010). REACH of Jackson County, a non-profit organization committed to promoting economic self-sufficiency and zero tolerance for domestic violence and sexual assault, received over 400 domestic violence calls, and provided services to over 700 adult victims and 69 children in fiscal year 2009-10. Additionally, during 2009, the Jackson County Sheriff's Office and the Sylva Police Department received 535 and 169 calls respectively. It has been noted that a child's exposure to their father abusing their mother is the strongest risk factor for transmitting violent behavior from one generation to the next .



The Grant

A Call to Men is a leading national program that galvanizes men and boys committed to ending all forms of violence against women. In July 2009, REACH of Jackson County received GCC funding to help implement this highly successful national program in Western North Carolina. A collaborative effort with the Western Carolina University Women's Center and the Department of Social Work, the program explores the underlying causes of gender-based violence, such as perceptions of male entitlement and ownership, rigid gender roles, and crippling definitions of manhood. Shifting social norms that define masculinity will help reduce violence against women by creating a new, non-violent perspective for young men and boys. The main focus of the group is to increase awareness of a very simple fact – sexism is at the root of domestic violence, sexual assault and violence against women. The project seeks to challenge traditional images of manhood that interfere with men actively taking a stand to end violence and sexual assault. Referrals come from Mountain Youth Resources, Division of Social Services, REACH counselors, local civic and youth groups, and the community.

'A Call to Men' works with men and boys to end all forms of violence against women. Tony Porter (below) is the founder of the program.



Although historically it has been almost entirely women who have been at the forefront addressing this issue, the program notes that it is essential men play a primary role in the solution. While communities around the nation are calling on men to step up and serve as positive role models for boys, the cycle of violence will not be broken if those men have not examined the ways in which they adhere to negative social norms.

Tony Porter, founder of *A Call to Men*, has provided training and consultation for men in the community and surrounding counties. REACH invited men in the community to create an *Action Group*, later renamed the *Men's Circle*, to address the issues of violence against women and to engage young men and boys in the process of examining the effects of sexism and rigid traditional roles of women

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Participants attending the 'A Call to Men' training session held at Western Carolina University.

and men. The *Action Group* has engaged in a variety of strategies to reduce contributors to violence. These activities empower youth to end violence in relationships – their own and that of peers – through education, skill development, and social competence. The group continues to serve in an advisory role to surrounding counties as they develop their own programs. Recently, the project coordinator was interviewed by a regional television station that aired a 45-minute interview on a local program to showcase the project's efforts to end violence against all women.

Goals & Objectives Update

To achieve the overall goal of the project, the organization aims to achieve the following five objectives:

- Provide *A Call to Men* training for at least 50 men in Jackson and surrounding counties to educate and engage participants – In October 2009, REACH of Jackson County hosted *A Call to Men* training session at Western Carolina University. Forty-two persons were in attendance at the high-energy event from all walks of life, ranging from DSS staffers, members of the clergy, to concerned men from the area that were ready to take a more active stand against violence against women.
- Form an Action Group of at least 10 local men at monthly meetings – The program has consistently held monthly *Men's Circle* meetings consisting of 8 regular members with 15 individuals who have had occasional contact with the group. There are more who have expressed interest to remain on the mailing list and intend to become more active.
- Provide at least two monthly group mentoring activities for at-risk youth – Mentoring activities are held bi-monthly at a regional group home for at-risk teens and in various classroom settings. While altering from group to group, activities may include art responses to the principles discussed, media literacy presentations and discussions, and/or lectures/presentations by guest speakers. In April 2010, the official name *Man Up* was given to the youth group program. In using the first letter of each word of M-A-N U-P, the objective of the group is given: Mentoring A New Understanding of People. Upon its development, the group even secured a youthful, edgy logo for appeal to the younger generation, while featuring enticing action colors and images.
- Shift attitudes of participating youth concerning gender stereotypes and roles contributing to violence against women – 100% of the youth at the group home have displayed a positive shift in attitude based on process groups and feedback. A formal survey developed in conjunction with the School of Social Work at Western Carolina University has been finalized and has been used since the first week of November 2010.
- Facilitate the development of a community education campaign designed and implemented by youth participating in the program and increase the self-confidence and skills of three quarters of the participating youth – This objective has been under discussion since the onset of the program. The *Men's Circle*,



'Man Up' is the group mentoring program for at-risk-youth.

serving as the advisory board to the youth activities, is considering numerous options, such as a 'graffiti wall' or a youth-collaborative video project, in addition to others. The intention is to begin the public awareness campaign in January 2010, to maximize the visibility for the entire year, even after funding for the program has ended. The group is looking to the awareness project as a tool for strengthening their numbers, visibility in the community, and public and financial support, to gain sustainability for the program.

Accomplishments

In addition to the above mentioned goal updates, *A Call to Men*-Western North Carolina has had several successes outside the objectives of the program.

- The Coordinator has been sharing the message of *A Call to Men* with male-dominated groups throughout the region. Several Rotary Clubs have been given a 'crash course' in media literacy, which is a presentation of visual proof of sexism in our social media, showing images and clips from advertising, music videos and lyrics, video games, pop culture icons, and other ways women are portrayed negatively in our society. Plans to take the message to a younger crowd, the local male youth of the Boy Scouts of America, are in process.
- A spin-off from the *Men's Circle* is now sharing *A Call to Men* with at-risk youth of the Eastern Band of Cherokee population. Thru media literacy programs and discussions, the traditional images of manhood are being challenged.
- The *A Call to Men* program has been a focus of REACH of Jackson County's fundraising efforts for nearly two years. Again, in an effort to attain sustainability for the program, REACH of Jackson County has featured the program in their, 1) Fall Giving Campaign-2009, 2) donation thank you letters, and 3) as the main focal point of their last two Annual Fundraiser Benefits. In fact, in 2009, the fundraiser focused on the entire *A Call to Men* program, and then in 2010 the focus shifted to the youth component, Man Up.
- The message of *A Call to Men* is making its way into the college campuses of the area. Southwestern Community College's 'Early College' students are learning about media literacy. Whereas, the Western Carolina University Social Work Association had a more concentrated lesson in sexism being at the root of violence against women. There are plans underway to meet with a few of the male-only fraternities and male sports teams on campus, as well.

Summary

A Call to Men is an entirely new approach to diminishing violence against women, as it calls upon the men of the community to address the issue with the simple concept of eliminating sexism from society. The work of REACH of Jackson County's *Men's Circle* and *Man Up* youth program are bringing about a change in the attitudes of men and youth in the area thru media literacy, discussion groups, and educational outreach. The success of the program is seen as each new outreach opportunity arises, bringing a sense of new enlightenment regarding sexism in everyday life to those that experience the program's entire central message.

"When most men are made aware of, not only the tremendous impacts of domestic violence, but also the subtle ways it is incubated and reinforced in our society, they want to stop it. More men need to be exposed to this information."

— Robert Cochran, Director of Jackson County Dept of Social Services

A Call to Men

GRANT SUMMARY

Area Served: Jackson County and Surrounding Counties

Implementing Agency: REACH, Inc. of Jackson County

Project Director: Kim Roberts-Fer

Project Coordinator: Jennifer Dirkes

Funding: \$132,738.90

Overview: This project seeks to reduce community contributors to gender-based violence and to improve outcomes for youth through the development and implementation of the national program model entitled *A Call to Men*.

Accomplishments: In October 2009, REACH of Jackson County hosted *A Call to Men* training session at Western Carolina University. Forty-two persons were in attendance at the high-energy event.

The program has consistently held monthly Men's Circle meetings consisting of eight regular members and 15 individuals who have had occasional contact with the group. There are more who have expressed interest to remain on the mailing list and intend to become more active.

Mentoring activities are held bi-monthly at a regional group home for at-risk teens and in various classroom settings. Activities have included art responses to the principles discussed, media literacy presentations and discussions, and/or lectures/presentations by guest speakers.

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The *Men's Circle*, serving as the advisory board to the youth activities, is considering numerous options, such as a 'graffiti wall' or a youth-collaborative video project, in addition to others. The intention is to begin a public awareness campaign in January 2010 to maximize the visibility for the entire year, even after funding for the program has ended.