



Mediation Services

Where conflict becomes opportunity

NEWS RELEASE

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FOUNDATION AWARDS \$20,000 FOR JUVENILE JUSTICE

Holland, MI (September, 2022) The Community Foundation of the Holland/Zeeland Area (CFHZ) has awarded *Mediation Services* \$20,000 for a new program designed to help first-time juvenile offenders and the persons they harmed move forward towards a brighter future.

The *RH²: Repair Harm & Restore Hope* program brings restorative justice to the Ottawa County Juvenile Justice system. Restorative justice provides accountability for first-time juvenile offenders to repair the harm they caused.

“We are grateful for this investment from the CFHZ. This grant means we can now offer young offenders a better way forward, which helps to strengthen our entire community,” said Elizabeth Scott, Executive Director of *Mediation Services*.

Restorative justice centers upon juvenile offenders taking responsibility for their actions and restoring their victims to wholeness by hearing the victims’ perspectives and learning about how their lives were impacted. The *RH²* program gives victims an enhanced voice in this early-intervention process and offers young offenders the opportunity to avoid a juvenile court record if they complete a rigorous restorative action plan.

The *RH²* program works in collaboration with the Ottawa County Prosecutors’ office and the clinical counseling services of Bethany of Holland. Young offenders who qualify for the program must accept responsibility for their actions and agree to community service and counseling. Part of making restitution for the harm they have caused includes writing a letter of apology to the persons they harmed.

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“The goal is to address the harm the juvenile caused in a restorative way and allow the juvenile the opportunity to avoid entering into the Juvenile Justice system,” said Lee Fisher, Prosecuting Attorney of Ottawa County.

Mediation Services has been providing conflict resolution services for nearly 30 years and created this pilot program with the goal of restoring hope to these serious situations for both victims and their juvenile offenders.

“Mediation Services is a consistent resource for collaborative problem solving in our community and is an ideal partner for this program,” Fisher added.

This announcement comes as the Ottawa County Prosecutors’ office is responding to an increase in juvenile cases because a law went into effect which treats 17-year-olds as juveniles instead of adults. This program could help reduce the number of juveniles entering into the court system and improve the lives of both the juveniles and everyone impacted by their actions.

This program is made possible by a grant from the Community Foundation of the Holland/Zeeland Area. Members of the Ottawa County Prosecutors’ Office and the CFHZ Foundation will present the award to *Mediation Services* staff and board members at their office: 291 W. Lakewood Blvd. Suite 9 Holland Mi 49424.

The event will take place Sept. 6th at 3pm. Please allow time for construction on Lakewood Blvd in front of the office. Call Penny Shuff with any questions: 312-208-2706

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