

Building Coalition in Grand Junction
Director's Comments

6-3-14

It was my pleasure to travel to Grand Junction, Colorado this last weekend, to meet with families of those with a sexual offense, with parole supervision/re-entry, with a treatment provider, with those who have committed a sexual offense and are now under supervision and in treatment, and with one man who is off supervision, but is a registrant, and who has moved on to assisting his brothers (and sisters in some cases) with the business of restoration!

One of CSOR's mission components is the knowledge of current resources in all parts of the State of Colorado for those who have committed and been convicted of sexual offenses, and the building of a coalition and the development of more resources in each of these areas where those coming out of the Colorado Department of Corrections will parole. The Western Slope supervision and treatment entities seem a bit more laid back than those in the Denver Metropolitan Area, perhaps as those on the Western Slope suggest, they do not have the amount and intensity of crime in their area as is present in Denver. The Parole Office on the Western Slope has a comfortable look. You are able to enter without going through any kind of security situation – there is no paper or shading over the glass that indicates the presence of an office, and people are likely to smile at you as you enter!

The most exciting thing for me was getting to meet a number of the men I have been corresponding with over the years at the Colorado Department of Corrections. You get to know some through letters or over the phone, and form a "picture" of that person based on limited information. Once you physically see them, all the humanity and reality of that person's life before and after prison becomes more clear. Problems these men face include: getting a job; finding a place to live; getting around town on a less than adequate bus system; deciding whether or not to try to renew family relationships or if that is not possible, thinking about whether to attempt new relationships. The feelings of isolation people have while on parole are often overwhelming and sometimes lead to thoughts of suicide. This is especially true if a job has not been procured, if a person is homeless, if treatment or parole personnel are less than kind etc.

I look forward to visiting Pueblo and Colorado Springs, Ft. Collins, Greeley, and other areas of the state where larger numbers of people will eventually parole. It is great to see the eagerness of people in these areas to learn more, to form new relationships with people from other parts of the state, and to work together to solve the challenges regarding the restoration of those with a sexual offense, reducing the number of people victimized, and improving the level of safety for all of us!