

The Network for Peace through Dialogue  
in cooperation with **Marymount Manhattan College**

Presents

## **Dialogue In/As Action**

### **Dialogue and its Prerequisites in an Inmate Setting**

#### **Maria Scanelli Insight Development Group**

Maria Scanelli of Insight Development Group has been working on a pilot program at the Oregon State Correctional Institute. The restorative justice program consists of three ten-week modules and is led by seven volunteer facilitators and four inmate liaisons. Twenty-two inmates, convicted of various crimes including burglary, rape, and murder, participated in the program. The facilitators worked with the inmates and the chaplain to develop the curriculum. Each week they meet for a 1.5 hour session. The facilitators meet before and after each session to discuss what is going on with the group. Early on they decided to include four inmates who could act as liaisons and keep them apprised of developments during the week and act as go-betweens, guides to inmate culture. Group's Objective: "It is our goal to understand the depth of our actions-- those that brought us here and those that led up to our crimes-- and how they have affected our victims and those around us. In doing so, we will be more able to perceive situations with empathy and make decisions that take into account our communities and families." Participants acknowledge that the program is purely for personal growth, knowledge, and rebuilding their ability to connect with their communities. There is no certificate or letter of recommendation associated with participation.

Maria said that participants cannot have any hidden agendas. It's crucial that all group members are there for the right reasons. Participants must accept accountability for their own actions. The first module involves a detailed sharing of personal crime. All communication is kept confidential, and Maria and the other volunteers take steps to make sure that hearing the stories of others does not traumatize the group members. Copies of the project outline and the letter of welcome participants receive are available. , as is a handout from an exercise we were planning to do as a group but did not get to due to time constraints and a lively discussion. Copies of the full curriculum are also available upon request.

