



"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world. Indeed it is the only thing that ever has."

MARGARET MEAD

CIT PETITION PRESENTATION

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FACES looks forward to working with Chesterfield County, the Board of Supervisors and the Partnership for Change in order to develop and implement Crisis Intervention Training for police in the county. This presentation was made at the Board of Supervisors meeting in May, 2009.

Hello. My name is Pam Weiseman. I want to thank the Board of Supervisors and the County Administrator for this opportunity to speak about the funding of Crisis Intervention Teams in Chesterfield County. I am here to present a petition of over eleven hundred signatures for funding for Crisis Intervention Teams in Chesterfield County. I did not come alone for many citizens are passionate about this issue. Please stand up to show your support.

I am the chairperson of **FACES**, a mental health advocacy and educational organization here in Chesterfield County that seeks to increase the awareness of mental illness and dissolve the stigma surrounding it. Mental illness is extremely common affecting one in four families. Also, new studies show that nearly one in five military personnel returning from Iraq and Afghanistan suffer from PTSD or clinical depression. I am also a member of Partnership for Change, a five year county initiative to improve services for people with mental illness who interact with Chesterfield County's criminal justice system. Partnership for Change also seeks to provide CIT training for police.

CIT is a special training for police officers whose main purpose is to have officers recognize manifestation of psychiatric distress and how to de-escalate crisis thus avoiding officer injuries, consumer deaths; and tragedy for the community. CIT are trained to connect people to treatment and to divert them from jail.

On April 25, 2009 a tragic event occurred here in Chesterfield County. A 31 year old, unarmed man with a long history of schizophrenia was shot and killed by the police in front of his distraught parents. He had become aggressive with his father and his mother called 911 for help. This dreadful outcome was the worst fear come true, not only for his family, but also for all the families and friends who have a loved one with a critical mental illness. What other manifestation of an illness could bring such added sorrow. Imagine a reoccurrence of cancer coming with the fear of being shot or going to jail. Could this event that happened so recently in

Chesterfield County have been averted if the officers had CIT training? We are not here to dwell on the past. We are here to advocate for proven best practices for the future.

For people who are challenged by illnesses such as schizophrenia, bipolar, anxiety, and depression, recovery is a real and possible. When there is a relapse, an enlightened response is required from the community. That understanding of an effective response is the essence of CIT training. Mentally ill persons should be treated with respect and empathy, not as criminals.

CIT started in Memphis, Tenn. in 1988 when a similar tragedy occurred. Since then CIT has spread nationwide and in Virginia. Most recently, Henrico County and Richmond City have initiated these trainings. Research has shown many positive outcomes where these programs have been started including significant reduction of arrests, reduction in officer stigma toward those with mental illness, more treatment options, and lesser re-arrests.

The time is now for Chesterfield County to fund comprehensive CIT training. One of Chesterfield County's stated Strategic Goals is to be the safest and most secure community. Let's make sure that is true for the mentally ill and the police officers who interact with them at critical times. We must learn from history if not we are doomed to repeat it. **FACES** is willing to work with you to make this a reality. Please accept this petition of over eleven hundred people who believe that the time is now for comprehensive CIT in Chesterfield County. Thank you.

Pam Weiseman, **FACES**, Chairperson