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Not Just a Degree, a Movement: The IIRP Graduate School Confers its First 14 Master's Degrees

Bethlehem, Pa. – On June 21, 2008, the International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP) Graduate School held its first commencement ceremony, in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, conferring 14 masters degrees: five in Restorative Practices and Education and nine in Restorative Practices and Youth Counseling.

Restorative practices, an emerging transdisciplinary field that enables people to resolve conflict and restore and build community in an increasingly disconnected world, has been shown to effectively build cooperation, foster strong relationships and create a climate that engages people to learn, grow and change, in education, social service, criminal justice and workplace settings worldwide.

Dr. John Braithwaite, a major force in the restorative justice movement (a subset of restorative practices) gave the commencement address. A fellow at Australian National

University's Research School of Social Sciences and the author of numerous books and publications on criminology, including the seminal *Crime, Shame and Reintegration*, Braithwaite is the recipient of the inaugural Stockholm Prize for Criminology, among many other awards. He is currently engaged in a 20-year project, "Peacebuilding Compared," analyzing the effectiveness of peacebuilding strategies in societies suffering armed conflict.

Ted Wachtel, founding president of the IIRP Graduate School, shook the hand of each masters degree recipient in turn as he presented them with their diplomas: Craig Adamson, John Bailie, Judy Happ, Jolene Head, Samantha Heyman, Stephen Orrison, Christine Meyers, John Infantino, David Suesz, all residents of Bucks County; to Rev. Paul Langston-Daley and Elizabeth Smull of Montgomery County; and to Pamela Thompson, Julie Vitale and Theresa Hansen, of Northampton, Lehigh and Chester counties respectively.

Said Ted Wachtel, "This first graduating class is the vanguard of thousands of future graduates who will influence education, criminal justice, social welfare and organizational management in ways that will restore community and build a healthier society."

The IIRP began offering master's degree and certificate programs in restorative practices to educators, youth-serving and criminal justice professionals and others in August 2006. Classes are held in Bethlehem and at satellite locations in Lansdale, Pa., and Woodlyn, Pa.

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