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'Tough Love' presides at Bethlehem 'restorative' school

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A graduate school that is pioneering an emerging social science has named its first president.

The International Institute for Restorative Practices Graduate School inaugurated Ted Wachtel as its founding president on Oct. 8 at the Hotel Bethlehem.

Wachtel grew to national prominence in the 1980s as co-author of "Toughlove," a best-selling book for parents of troubled adolescents.

The institute, which he founded, is the world's first graduate school wholly dedicated to restorative practices — an interdisciplinary field uniting education, counseling, criminal justice, social work and organizational management.

The concept of restorative practices has its roots in restorative justice, which attempts to repair the harm done to people and relationships rather than simply punish offenders.

The graduate school received its charter of authority from the Pennsylvania Department of Education in June 2006 and opened the following October. Its main campus is on Main Street in Bethlehem, and classes are offered there and in Lansdale.

It offers master's degrees in restorative practices and education, and restorative practices and youth counseling, as well as a graduate certificate.

The seeds of IIRP were planted 30 years ago, when Wachtel and his wife, Susan, former public school teachers, turned their energies to the problem of troubled young people who were falling through the cracks.

They started a network of nonprofit organizations, the Community Service Foundation and Buxmont Academy centers, which serve young people and their families.

For information, see www.iirp.org.



Ted Wachtel became president of the International Institute for Restorative Practices Graduate School on Oct. 8.

Thomas Kosa photo