

## **Door County Civility Project - Background Information**

### **How did the Door County Civility Project get started?**

The Door County Civility Project (DCCP) was formed in 2013 after several years of conversations:

- In 2012 the League of Women Voters of Door County (LWVDC) noted that many candidates for local elected offices run uncontested. One of the noted reasons was that people simply don't want to "take the guff" they saw elected officials receiving – a sign of incivility.
- In 2012, the Wisconsin Council of Churches promoted "The Season of Civility". Church groups across Wisconsin, including several local churches, conducted discussions of Parker Palmer's book, Healing the Heart of Civility. This led to increased local interest in civility.
- In 2012 the LWV Door County (LWV DC) held seven public showings of the documentary film *Patriocracy*. The film focused on national political issues, however, discussions held after each showing indicated the growing frequency of acts incivility, perceived or real, was a serious concern among attendees.

This community input led the LWV DC to study the Civility Projects of Duluth-Superior, Truckee-Tahoe and Oshkosh, all based on the work of Dr. P.M. Forni, author of Choosing Civility and The Civility Solution. League members communicated with representatives of the Duluth-Superior and Truckee-Tahoe Civility Projects and brought the Oshkosh team to Door County to conduct a training in January, 2013. Over 40 people attended, including leaders of schools, non-profits, churches, businesses, etc. When the participants were surveyed following the presentation, there was resounding support to initiate a Door County Civility Project. Survey comments referred to the epidemic problem of bullying in schools, incivility at some local public meetings and their personal experiences of incivility in the workplace as reasons why our community could benefit from a civility project. In May 2013 a Core Planning Committee of twelve community leaders was formed. In July, 2013 the DCCP became a fund of the Door County Community Foundation. The Core Planning Committee developed a strategic plan, budget and program goals. Twenty people agreed to be part of our volunteer speaker's bureau.

### **What is the mission and vision of DCCP?**

The Core Planning Committee developed a mission statement:

***The Door County Civility Project is a community-based initiative that aims to foster and incorporate principles of civility into the fabric of everyday life in Door County.***

This DCCP mission grew out of the vision documented by the planning committee:

***We hope to see communities full of engaged citizens who value the opinions and ideas of others and are committed to civil behavior and discourse. It's not a campaign to end disagreements. Disagreements can lead to healthy debate, which brings new information and ideas to light. Good communication is the key! We plan to reach not only elected officials and political groups but also regular people, in schools, neighborhood organizations, service groups, churches, businesses and even the parents on the sidelines of youth athletic contests. We believe that civility can be as contagious as incivility!***

## **What does the DCCP offer?**

As of September, 2021 the Door County Civility Project volunteers have introduced the Project and discussed civility with over 4000 individuals in over 300 group short presentations in the public, private, non-profit, and religious sectors of Door County. Thirty two-hour workshops and countless one-hour training sessions have been conducted around the county, including Washington Island. DCCP presentations have been made to the state-wide conferences and meetings of the WI Education Association Council, WI Education Association Council - Retired, WI Association of School District Administrators, WI Association of School Boards, WI County Register of Deeds Association and the WI League of Municipalities.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, March, 2020 and September, 2021, sixteen training sessions were conducted virtually and in small-in-person groups because of COVID-19 safety protocols. Topics included the *Nine Tools of Speak Your Peace*, *Emotional First Aide*, and *Guide to Difficult Conversations*.

While the Nine Tool of Speak Your Peace continue to a focal point in our training programs, sessions can be tailored to focus on a specific area of interest for each group.

## **What is our media presence?**

DCCP has a website - [DoorCountyCivilityProject.org](http://DoorCountyCivilityProject.org) and a Facebook page with 600 + followers. In 2022 the website migrated to a page within the Door County Community Foundation's website. Videos, power point slides, curriculum, banners, posters and other resources can be found on this website.

Public awareness of Tools of Civility (Speak Your Peace) and the Civility Project has been the focus of articles and ads in The Peninsula Pulse, Door County Advocate and Door County Daily News. Many of these articles can be found on this website.

## **How has DCCP supported the youth of Door County?**

In 2015, at the request of Southern Door School District's High School Principal, the DCCP developed a curriculum of information and discussion guides focused on the nine tools of Speak Your Peace for use in high school advisory groups. The Speak Your Peace poster became the cover and theme of the 2016 yearbook and theme for the 2016 annual anthology of student writing.

In 2016 a *Be Respectful* banner was created for display in school gymnasiums and at athletic fields to encourage good sportsmanship on the playing fields and in the spectator stands. PSAs were developed for event programs and announcements at sporting events.

In 2017 DCCP was proudly recognized with a *Friends of Education Award* from Governor Tony Evers who was the Superintendent of the Wisconsin Department of Education at the time.

## **What organizations have been our collaborating partners?**

In the fall of 2016 and 2017 DCCP collaborated with United Way of Door County, the Door County Non-Profit Group, Door County Community Foundation to offer 2-day Vital Smart workshops, *Crucial Conversations - Tools for Talking when Stakes are High*.

In the spring of 2018 DCCP collaborated with HELP of Door County, Inc., Hope United Church of Christ, JUST Door County, Inc., PFLAG Door County, and the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Door County to provide *Bystander Training* which prepared participants to intervene safely and appropriately when witnessing incidents of discrimination, harassment, or harm.

In 2018-19 DCCP collaborated with Write On Door County and the Door County League of Women Voters to present six *Let Your Voice Be Heard* workshops designed to give participants effective strategies to communicate their requests, opinions, and concerns with elected representatives.

DCCP collaborated with the Door Community Auditorium to present a winter series of speakers from the University of Wisconsin, Green Bay. The 2019 series focused on *Promoting Civility, Strengthening community, and Encouraging Empathy*; the 2020 series focused on *Political Movements – Reconstruction, Abolition, Women’s Suffrage and Immigration*; the 2022 series focused on the *First Nations of our Region*.

### **What have we learned?**

What we have learned from these conversations with the people of Door County is while most consider themselves to be civil people and the groups they are involved with to generally behave in a civil manner most also admit that they have had personal and professional experiences when they or others around them have struggled to be civil, usually when angry, frustrated or hurt. Local governmental bodies, businesses, and organizations have chosen to endorse civility; not because they feel they have not been civil in the past but because they simply believe it is the right thing to do. It may help their groups and their constituents maintain civility when the next contentious situation comes along. The work of the Door County Civility Project continues.