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Baltimore Community Mediation Center and FreeState Justice partner with Baltimore City Police and Charles Village residents for LGBTQIA Dialogues

(Baltimore, MD) - Baltimore Community Mediation Center will facilitate large group dialogue circles between **residents of Charles Village**, members of the **LGBTQIA community** and **Baltimore City Police Department** on **October 18th from 6 pm to 8 pm at 3333 Greenmount Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21218**. Members of the Charles Village, LGBTQIA and Police communities are invited to participate in this free program. **This is the first time that these groups have come together in a large group facilitated process to discuss policing and community issues that affect them all.**

Dialogue Circles provide a safe space for open discussion between groups, anchored in principles of emotional intelligence. During these discussions, all participants have the opportunity to share personal experiences, hear new perspectives, exercise empathy for the experiences of one another and consider how to make their interactions with each other more positive. A similar dialogue circle program was held between the Baltimore City Police Department and the Gilmore Homes community in 2016, leading to implementation of community-based policing initiatives and policies. Based on the inclusive, neutral and community-based style of those dialogue circles, FreeState Justice reached out to Baltimore Community Mediation Center in Spring of 2017 for help.

Dialogue circles enable participants to hear new perspectives and get an opportunity to feel heard by a group that they are not used to engaging with. Laura McMahon DePalma, Staff Attorney for Free State Justice, notes, "by working together, Community Mediation and FreeState Justice are using their respective expertise to offer affirming conflict resolution dialogue between the LGBTQ community and its allies, law enforcement, and community associations. This partnership will ensure that the LGBTQ community is heard and represented in a complex situation that must be addressed in order to improve community relations in Baltimore."

These sessions seek to work toward healing relationships and sharing perspectives that will inform future decision-making by the involved communities. Alexa Del Piano, Community Mediation's Intake and Partnership Coordinator is seeking Charles Village residents interested in participating. Pre-registration is strongly encouraged, though not required. She can be reached at 410-467-9165 x 404 or by email at adelpiano@communitymediation.org.

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Coming up: Baltimore Community Mediation Center **Annual Celebration: September 28th** from 5-8 pm at DLA Piper, Mt. Washington. Mediators, community members and local elected officials will honor Peacemaker of the Year, Erricka Bridgeford, and others. Mayor Catherine Pugh will also speak. Tickets at: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/baltimore-community-mediation-centers-annual-celebration-tickets-37476072943>

Run for ReEntry: October 7-8, Lorig Charkoudian will run from Hagerstown to Baltimore to highlight the challenges facing returning citizens and their families. The run will end at the Baltimore Community Mediation Center by 3 pm at 3333 Greenmount Avenue, where returning citizens and local elected officials will hold a press conference. More information at <http://reentrymediation.wixsite.com/run4reentry>.

Mediation Partnerships Benefit Baltimore. Baltimore Community Mediation Center is the go-to organization when people need to have difficult conversations with one another. We provide free mediation services and dispute resolution skills training to Baltimore City residents. Sixty-four volunteer mediators mediated 618 sessions in FY2016, working with partners ranging from the Baltimore City State's Attorney office to Baltimore City Schools to community groups. All mediators have at least 55 hours of experiential training, hands-on experience, and continuous work to improve their skills. Community Mediation is a member of Community Mediation Maryland (CMM), a coalition of 15 community mediation centers throughout the state. Learn more at www.communitymediation.org.