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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Heritage University and Dispute Resolution Center Forming Community Response Teams to Respond to Crises

Toppenish, Wash. – Heritage University and the Dispute Resolution Center of Yakima and Kittitas Counties (DRC) are forming Community Response Teams to create safer, more peaceful communities. Each team will have 16 members which represent elected officials, law enforcement, neighborhood activists and students. The goal of each team will be to respond to crises in a timely, informed and unified manner by offering active listening, mediation and conflict resolution.

The creation of the community response teams is part of a three-year partnership between Heritage University and the DRC. It is funded by Washington Campus Compact/AmeriCorps VISTA and by a grant from the Yakima Valley Community Foundation.

According to Community Communication Program Coordinator Vanessa Alviso, "This program is ultimately about community self-determination. We believe that the solutions to community crises are the community members themselves."

As part of this program, Alviso has joined Heritage University as an adjunct instructor, teaching mediation and community communications courses. DRC Director Sarah Augustine, with Heritage faculty support, will provide the structure and training needed to form strong, supportive networks that help team members work together towards a shared goal: a peaceful community. Training sessions for team members took place in late January in Yakima and Sunnyside.

For more information, contact Vanessa Alviso at Alviso_V@heritage.edu or (509-305-0746).

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