

VORP News

Volume 21, Issue 45 October 2003

**Victim Offender Reconciliation Program
of the Central Valley, Inc.**

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Fall Has Come!

From the Administrator

VORP does two different types of case. The traditional VORP case is for juvenile offenders charged with misdemeanors. The joint meeting a mediator leads in those cases usually includes the offender and parents, the victim and maybe a support person for the victim. The other type of case is the Community Justice Conference. These cases involve felonies and a much larger group of participants in the joint meeting. Rick Gaston and I are working a CJC case right now where there will probably be 30 people in the meeting, including a Deputy District Attorney, two defense attorneys, a probation officer and two police officers. The offenders in this case have numerous felony charges.

We are in the process of preparing more of our mediators to handle these more complex CJC cases which can be very time consuming and require the mediator to have a high level of comfort with the process. If you are one of our experienced mediators and are interested in working with CJC cases, give us a call.

At our last mediator training people were surprised, as usual, to discover that most of VORP's income comes from individuals and churches. It was a good reminder for me that we are peculiar in this way. Thanks to you for helping us to stay that way.

Duane Ruth-Heffelbower



A Success Story

By Megan Thompson and Helmine Bigler

Many things in life require patience. VORP is one of those. Johnny Phouthachack, our Agreement Manager, is a very patient guy. In June of this year, Johnny collected the last payment in a case that began seven years ago. Three minors were involved in an auto vandalism. Only one has managed to keep his agreement to pay back \$1,200 he owed to the victim. When this young man first started working on his agreement, he was not very responsible, and he had a hard time making his payments. But with Johnny's encouragement, anything is possible. With Johnny's help, he had learned how to be responsible about making his payments and understands the importance of making things right with the victim. Today he is married, has a family, and a stable job. In fulfilling his agreement, he feels like a great weight has been lifted off his shoulders. He says that VORP understood his situation and never gave up on him.

Thank you, Johnny, for putting so much effort into your work and for helping these young people to realize their full potential.

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 * **Fall 2003** *
 * **Volunteer Mediator Trainings** *
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- October 10-11
- November 7-8
- February 6-7
- March 5-6
- April 16-17
- June 4-5

Friday 6:30pm - 9:30pm
 Saturday 8:30am - 3:30pm

Call our office to reserve dates: 455-9803.

Thank You!

We would like to thank all donors for your contributions over the past year. Your generosity enables us to be better stewards of this work we have been given. We would also like to ask for your continued support of this ministry.

Mediator Interview with Renee Soto

By Helmine Bigler

Renee Soto has been a VORP volunteer mediator since 2002. She first learned about VORP while working on her concentration area in the Masters Program of Peacemaking and Conflict Studies at Fresno Pacific University. She was required to mediate VORP cases for a class and has had good experiences with the program. Renee believes that the way VORP teaches minors to deal with conflict is a needed tool in the Juvenile Justice System. In her opinion, it would be ideal if this alternative Restorative Justice program was the first option in all juvenile offender cases. Renee says community members, especially parents, should be more informed about VORP. She finds that Community Justice Conference (pre-sentencing) cases are very rewarding. In her last case, the offenders were happy with the outcome of the agreement, the victim was also pleased, experienced emotional recovery and reconciliation took place at the mediation.

Renee works as a Field Compliance Coordinator with an insurance company. Even at her workplace, she is able to use the communication skills and ways to deal with conflict she has learned through VORP.

Renee, we really appreciate your volunteer time that you give to VORP and to the community. Gods richest blessings!

Mediator Recognition List

The following is a list of all mediators who have received a case referral since Spring 2002 until present.

Bill Armstrong, Kariann Arndt, Karin Bartel, Ed Barton, Erin Been, Melinda Bernal, Daniel Bigler, Helmine Bigler, Giovanna Buitrago, David Case, Diane Castaneda, Jose Chaparro, Carroll Cotten, Leslie Daniel, Maria Diaz, Lori Easlton, Tara Fasold, Roy Felipe, Don Fischer, Claudia Fransen, Laura Fultz, Chelsea Garnett, Rick Gaston, Jay Griffith, Sarah Hanson, Justin Hebert, Armida Hernandez, Sarah Hinman, Stephany Kallos, Eleonore Kilabi, Rebecca Kliever, Sheron Lewis, Don Linscheid, Janet Livingston, Nancy Lopez, Ramona Loyd, Elmer Martens, Talitha Mayfield, Philip McIlhargey, Paula McKibbin, Stacy Mullins, Jayati Nath, Kenley Neufeld, Doug Noll, Sarah Norris, Alicia Parnell, Stephen Penner, Tony Redfern, Dale Reed, Amanda Riddle, Irma Robnett, Kristie Rogers, Duane Ruth-Heffelbower, Marissa Saldate, Jill Schellenberg, Kristy Smyth, Renee Soto, Cindy Sparks, Tamara Stankevich, Carmen Starlin, Jon Stewart, Gigi Stone, Johnna Sulit Maciel, Megan Thompson, Jennifer Toler, Leah Valencia, Leticia Vazquez, David Vecchio, Sally Vogl, Duane Wilkin, Jason Wilkinson, Arthur Wint, Sheryl Xavier, and Seth Yates.

VORP Board Members

Michael Blue, Chair
Dave Purvis, Secretary/Treasurer
Eleanor Richards
Arthur Wint
Jose Chaparro
Duane Ruth-Heffelbower, VORP Administrator

VORP Staff

Johnny Phouthachack, Agreement Manager
Helmine Bigler, Mediation Manager
Megan Thompson, Mediation Manager
Barry Guenther, Finance Manager
Kartika Suwandi, Finance Assistant Manager

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