

VORP

News

Victim Offender Reconciliation Program of the Central Valley, Inc.

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From the Administrator

Douglas Noll writes:

"Fresno has been a seedbed from which many restorative justice ideas have grown and flourished. The victim impact statement that pre-dated the use of restorative justice language was introduced in Fresno and is now used throughout the country.

Fresno's Victim Offender Reconciliation Program (VORP), founded in 1982, was the first in California and many of its models, including the Community Justice Conference, have been duplicated throughout California, the United States, and the world.

Restorative Justice Fundamental Principles were first written to provide guidance to the work of VORP in Fresno County. In August, 1995, the United Nations Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) Working Party on Restorative Justice adopted the Fresno principles as a foundation for its work in international restorative justice.

The Center for Peacemaking and Conflict Studies at Fresno Pacific University has provided leadership and continues to study and develop restorative justice theory and practice. In addition to training professionals in restorative justice principles and practices, it sponsors the annual Restorative Justice Conference, which brings restorative justice advocates and decision makers together for discussions and presentations on restorative justice programs, principles, and applications.

Many ideas and programs have emerged to help offenders and victims make constructive adjustments in their lives."

The key element in all of this is the day in and day out work of VORP staff and volunteers, building a reputation case by case for over two decades. Theory is great, but it does not have the ability to move people to action. It is only when theory speaks to people and action proves it to be true that the world changes. We are on the cusp of change, that awkward time when one can't tell whether we are about to leap forward, or fall back. Our daily work with VORP helps create the real possibility that this time we will leap forward into a new understanding of how victims and offenders can work together to change the world. Thanks for being part of it.

Duane Ruth-Heffelbower, Administrator

Mediation Story

By John Sewell

The case I was given to mediate was an incident where a group of four youths were egging each other on to throw rocks at passing vehicles. Unfortunately, only one of these youths was finally singled out, apprehended and charged, through the juvenile court system. As a newly trained mediator it appeared fairly

There is no trust more sacred than the one the world holds with children. There is no duty more important than ensuring that their rights are respected, that their welfare is protected, that their lives are free from fear and want and that they grow up in peace.

Kofi Annan

straight forward. Follow the manual, recipe or guidelines, and everything would be fine. This is exactly what I did do, along with my original partner, Ben. Initially things went smoothly. An offender meeting was set up and duly completed. However what on the surface seemed simple, really was not. The offender, due to home situation, was staying with his Grandmother, Monday through Friday, only living at home on weekends. Both of his parents were clinically deaf and worked unsocial hours at Home Town Buffet. He appeared very young, naïve and definitely contrite. His Grandmother seemed angry about him even being arrested, since no real damage was done or anyone hurt. Since fifty hours of community service was already being served, both Ben and I felt it would be wrong to further punish this particular youth.

At this point things began to get difficult. First, the semester concluded, meaning Ben disappeared out of town for the summer. Next, the victim meeting was initially forgotten about (by the victim), rescheduled and finally completed. Everything was now ready for the joint meeting, except the victim would be moving back to Texas in the not too distant future. As I began to try to accommodate both parties, the victim seemed to begin to become negative about the joint meeting. "Do I have to be there?" "I don't know if I'll be able to fit it in." I was beginning to feel like the case was slipping through my fingers. All I can say is to be flexible, only use the manual as a guideline, for theory and practice seldom form a perfect match. After several abortive efforts, I got permission from both parties to use my wife as a surrogate victim. Finally we were able to have the joint meeting, agreeing that a letter of apology would be sufficient to restore the relationship between the victim and offender. Incidentally, my wife played her part to perfection in the joint meeting.

In conclusion, I would reiterate to only use the manual as a guideline. One really has no control over how the process might evolve, so flexibility must be the name of the game.

Deep Thoughts

by Matthew Schellenberg

Are you ready to die? Some people think they are too young to consider death, or think that thinking about it would only cause unnecessary cognitive dissonance. Too many people go through life avoiding the ever-present question of what will happen to them when they die, even though it is one we must all eventually answer. If there is one thing I have noticed about death, it is that few ever see it coming. Few ever make it to their "deathbed" and even then can be caught off-guard by dying suddenly. Many think they will just be able to prepare when the time comes, but really, who would want to live a life without having the confidence of knowing what will happen to them when they die? Are the achievements and successes of your life really going to provide you the confidence to face death? Will any of it really have any eternal significance? What good is anything you've done or what people think of you, if you're dead? If you're not ready to die, you're not ready to live.

VORP kids will be at the Mile Long Yard Sale
on Huntington Blvd. in Fresno on September 11th
3647 E. Huntington Blvd.
The sale runs from 6 am - noon
Come out, support VORP & find some good bargains.

WELCOME



VORP would like to introduce Fred Risard, our new Graduate Assistant from Fresno Pacific University. We asked Fred to tell us a little about himself, and here's what he had to say:

I am on the ordination track for the Priesthood in the Episcopal Church Diocese of San Joaquin. In May of this year I completed my Masters of Divinity at Nashotah House Episcopal Seminary in Nashotah Wisconsin. Nashotah House prepares its seminarians in the Anglo Catholic Tradition with an Emphasis on the Eucharistic Liturgy. It is the Sacrament of the Eucharist that is at the center of our Sacramental life. It is in the Eucharist that we participate with Christ in His sacrifice and from which we are sanctified and reconciled with Him. It is from this reconciliation that we then go out into the world and seek reconciliation for and with our fellow man. It is this basis for which I find a purpose in ministry in VORP.

I am attracted to working with VORP because I see hope in this program helping to reduce, and eliminate, repetitive criminal behavior at an early age. The assumption is that deviant behavior is corrected easier in the formative years thus giving positive potential to the adolescence. And, I believe that this correction is best achieved through true reconciliation.

My primary ministry is in the parish of St. Mary's in Manteca where, as a layman I assist the Priest-in-charge in the daily affairs of the parish. This is a parish that has experienced much conflict and division the last two years. In December I will be taking canonicals in final preparation for ordination as a deacon, and then ordination as a priest. At some point I will then be appointed as Rector of St. Mary's.

Additionally, I am a graduate student working towards a Masters in the Peacemaking and Conflict Studies program with an emphasis on Church and Congregational Conflict. These studies are preparing me to give to the Church a ministry in the healing of the Church from conflict. Prior to responding to God's call to the priesthood, I was a building contractor working in the public sector primarily in school construction. Prior to that I had a short career in Silicon Valley. And prior to that I earned a BS in Crop Science from Cal Poly San Luis Obispo. I am single and have committed the last four years to God and preparation for ordination. Welcome to VORP, Fred!



Volunteer Mediator Training

September 10-11

October 8-9

November 12-13

Friday 6:30pm -9:30pm

Saturday 8:30am -3:30pm

Call our office to reserve dates: 455-9803

Thank You

VORP has received a \$400 donation to put toward the purchase of new computers. If we could get another \$400, we'd have enough to buy the computers. If you are able to donate funds, a computer running Windows 2000 or XP, or any other accessories, please contact our office at 455-9803 or email us at vorp@fresno.edu. *Thank you for your help. (If we receive more money than we need for computers, it will be used for other office expenses.)*



FUNDRAISING UPDATE

VORP kids are involved in a number of fundraising projects including selling "On the House" discount coupon books, cookbooks. Please call VORP (455-9803) if you'd like to support VORP kids in these efforts. The carwash held on August 20 was a big success. A big thank you to the kids, their parents and the customers.

PLEASE CALL THE VORP OFFICE IF:

- **you** would like to help with or play in a future VORP Basketball tournament
- **you** have any items to donate for the yard sale on September 11
- **you** would like to have VORP kids pick up your recyclables on a regular basis
- **you** have fundraising experience and would be willing to share any ideas with us
- **you** have time to volunteer helping coordinate projects and supervising kids while they work

VORP Board Members

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Barry Guenther	Finance Manager
Rodney Pearson	Intern

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