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Victim Offender Reconciliation Program of the Central Valley, Inc. 4882 E. Townsend Ave., Fresno, CA 93727 Phone: (559) 455-9803; Fax: (559) 252-4800 Email: vorp@fresno.edu | http://vorp.org

From the Administrator

Restorative Justice Conference in Review

"It's time," said the community and program panels at the 11th Restorative Justice Conference. It's time for us to start changing the system. The criminal justice system is clearly not working, and restorative justice is the most viable alternative. If relationships matter, restorative justice is the way to go. It is rare for a criminal case to turn on something other than relationships. The top-notch community panel representing all aspects of the community agreed. RJ needs to happen at every level everywhere. There were no disagreements from the community panel on these points. Sheriff Pierce and Supervisor Perea agreed., it is time to move to a restorative justice system in Fresno County.

The panel of Fresno leaders heard from Judge Fred McElrea of New Zealand and Dan Van Ness of Justice Fellowship how RJ principles work in real situations. They had no doubt that RJ could work in Fresno, particularly given the fact the Fresno's Victim Offender Reconciliation Program has been in business since

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ATTENTION ALL MEDIATORS!

Advanced training for experienced mediators: VORP is blessed with mediators who have a lot of experience. It is time to both upgrade your skills and acknowledge your expertise. On January 19, 2005 we will offer an advanced training for those who have done at least ten cases. This will both draw on the expertise of the participants and offer specific training in the more nuanced skills taught in the FPU masters degree program. Those who complete this training will receive VORP's "Master Mediator" certificate, and will be assigned our most complex or sensitive cases. Those who are close to the ten case mark are invited to call the office for new cases. We have them ready for you.

ALL MEDIATORS!!!!

If you have ever taken our mediation training course you are qualified to TAKE A CASE!!! We have a huge case flow and are constantly IN NEED of mediators!! Please call the VORP office to take a case! The number is 455-9803. We would greatly appreciate your help! Thank you!

Volunteer Mediator Training

November 11-12, 2005

January 13-14, 2006

Friday 6:30pm - 9:30pm

Saturday 8:30am - 3:30pm

Call 455-9803 to reserve a spot.

RJ Conference Continued from Previous column

It is time to implement Restorative Justice in Fresno through legislation. That was the community Panel's advice. You can be part of this movement by supporting Fresno's VORP. Please give and volunteer to the effort.

The community panel included: Dan DeSantis- Fresno Regional Foundation, G.L. Johnson-Pastor of People's Church, Dr. Arthur Wint- CSU Fresno, Kurt Madden-One by One Leadership, Deborah Odom-Vice Principal of Greenburg Elementary, Doug Noll- San Joaquin College of Law, Deborah Nankivell-CEO of the Fresno Business Council, Charlie Waters-Senior Vice President & Executive Editor of The Fresno Bee, Rick Gaston-President Black Political Council, Walt Parry- Fresno Metro Ministry and the Local Health Care Coalition, Fresno County Superior Court Presiding Judge Edward Sarkisian, Civil Presiding Judge Mark Snauffer, Juvenile Judge Dale Ikeda, Probation Division Director/Juvenile-Phil Kader, County Supervisor Henry Perea Sr., Sheriff Richard Pierce, Deputy Chief of Police Sharon Shaffer, Former Director of the California Department of Corrections Jim Rowland.

Church-based VORP:

Answering the question at the end of the day

by Tony Redfern, VORP Mediator and Community Development Coordinator

At the end of the day, I like to ask myself, "What have I done today to bring people together?" As a mediator I am absolutely thrilled to answer this question. For me, this question and its daily answer is the redemptive measurement of my work. I love to mediate and help people come together to experience forgiveness, agreement, and/or understanding.

For this reason, to be appointed VORP Community Development Coordinator, and to be responsible for starting church-based VORP programs, gives me another opportunity to answer the question. Even so, the question and, more importantly, the answers are broader than any one person.

The question really should be, "What are we doing as a community to bring people together?" There is a good answer: Church-based VORPs.

Why does VORP need the Church to share and shoulder the work of reconciliation in our communities?

VORP's case load is increasing. Due to ever growing confidence in VORP, the juvenile probation agencies are increasing the VORP case load as much as seven-fold. Therefore, VORP needs to increase its capacity to serve - namely, more people serving as volunteer mediators.

A good vehicle for bringing positive change to our community is the Church. The faith-community is a plentiful resource. Communities have problems and the Church has answers. Communities have liabilities and the Church has capabilities. Communities have needs and the Church

**Why does the Church need VORP to share and shoulder the work of reconciliation in our communities?**

VORP provides a turn-key practical ministry to churches and their communities that includes training, case management, and follow-up. VORP provides a proven process that brings healing to the community and a reality of accomplishment to offenders, victims, and VORP mediators. VORP participants express a high degree of satisfaction with the program. Offenders who participate in VORP are more likely to pay restitution and less likely to re-offend. That is something to celebrate!

At the end of the day, Church-based VORPs can do much to bring people together, to share and shoulder the work of reconciliation in our communities.

How about your church, are you ready for a Church-based VORP? If so, please contact me at 897-9225 or [tonyredfern@hotmail.com](mailto:tonyredfern@hotmail.com)

**Mediator Forms are now Available on the Web!**

Mediators! Have you ever needed an extra mediator narrative, or maybe another offender resource packet? Now you can print these out at your home! Just go to [vorp.org/forms](http://vorp.org/forms) All of the forms you can find in the "mediator folder" will be online for your convenience.

**WE NEED INTERPRETERS!!**

If you speak any other language in addition to English, we need your help. We are building a strong database of interpreters and are in special need of Hmong, Vietnamese, Cambodian. Without translators, these cases become very difficult to coordinate and mediate. Thank you for your help.

**VORP Staff**

Duane Ruth-Heffelbower	Administrator
Johnny Phouthachack	Agreement Manager
Jenna Preheim	Mediation Manager
Stephanie Rodriguez	Intern
Tamara Lane	Intern
Joe Montanez	Intern
Kindra Snow	Intern
Hans Gutierrez	Student Worker
Barry Guenther	Finance Manager

**New Faces at VORP**

Hello V.O.R.P. supporters! My name is **Kindra Snow** and I am Fresno born, Clovis raised, and a fifth year college student at Fresno State majoring in criminology and psychology. I will be an intern at V.O.R.P. for the next two months, and although I do not know what I want to do after I graduate I know that my time here at V.O.R.P. will be valuable in life.

A little more about me... When I am not in school or volunteering at V.O.R.P. I am coaching competitive gymnastics, working at my family's apparel business, or planning my September 2006 wedding. I am looking forward to working with all of you and contributing to the success of V.O.R.P. in any way I can!

**Are you interested in becoming a Community Justice Conference Mediator?**

**Tamara Lane** is a Graduate student in the Peacemaking and Conflict studies program at FPU and is currently doing her internship in mediation at VORP. She worked last year at the Center for Peacemaking and Conflict Studies as a Graduate Assistant. Tamara will be helping out with some of the Case Management related to the CJC case load and doing CJC mediations. She will also be working with the VORP staff in organizing and hosting an upcoming CJC Training course for mediators who have successfully completed five or more VORP mediations and who would like to do some of the more difficult cases. So if you have had some experience in VORP mediation and would like to participate in the training please call the VORP office at (559) 455- 9803.



**VORP Board Members**

Michael Blue, Chair	Arthur Wint
Dave Purvis, Secretary/Treasurer	José Chaparro
Eleanor Richards	

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