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

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\$100,000 Gift to VORP

Last week I met with long-time supporter and friend of VORP. He has a passion for seeing our community and our State be more fair and just for everyone. He wants our communities to be more peaceful and much less driven by fear. He wants people to experience *shalom*, the kind of peace when people are living in right relations with each other and with God.

He sees Restorative Justice, if embraced by our system leaders, as a key in moving in the directions mentioned above. He wants to see Fresno County be a model for the state of California. He knows that building the capacity of VORP to handle significantly more and more serious cases will require significant increases in volunteers, paid support staff, and administration. His hope is that providing this **\$100,000 matching funds challenge donation** will contribute to accomplishing these goals. His only requirement is that the money be matched by new contributors or by increased giving by current donors.

He has asked me to not put his name on this announcement because he wants the focus to be on Restorative Justice and VORP and not on him and his family. But he has given me permission to share his name if it will help encourage someone to

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Volunteer Mediator Training

May 19-20, 2006

September 15-16, 2006

Friday 6:30pm - 9:30pm

Saturday 8:30am - 3:30pm

Call 455-9803 to reserve a spot.

**Restorative Justice Work Being Implemented
at San Quentin Prison**

-Jack Dison

Many of the same principles and approaches used in VORP also have application in other settings, including California prisons for adults convicted of serious offenses.

The restorative small group works to help inmates take deep responsibility for their offenses and to enhance empathy for victims/survivors has been operating in San Quentin for about two years. These groups of nine inmates meet for two hours a week for eighteen weeks. Near the end of the eighteen weeks, surrogate victims join the group for extended sessions to tell their stories and listen to the stories of the inmates. During the eighteen week cycle inmates find that they can take steps toward healing and letting go.

The work in the small group emphasizes honest acknowledgment of and accountability for each inmate's criminal and life history, along with guidance for accessing feelings and examining thought and behavioral patterns. In a typical small group session, inmates present to other members of the group their responses to assignments which they have prepared and written up. The inmates find the work for these sessions challenging and even painful, but nevertheless highly productive. They also find in the group a place of safety and trust, a rarity in the prison environment.

The small groups have been extremely well received by inmates. A waiting list of inmates for future small groups has emerged through word of mouth at San Quentin. Inmates report that the small group work has given them invaluable assistance in going before parole board meetings along with preparation for facilitated dialogue with their own victims/survivors should that become possible.

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contribute so that the match can be given.

This is very exciting for me. I am hopeful that as we work on legislation that will enable Fresno County to become a model of Restorative Justice, the resources will become available to do it well.

Please consider helping make this possible by giving a contribution by becoming a volunteer mediator, and/or by talking with your friends, neighbors, and/or members of the Board of Supervisors and letting them know that you also would like to see Fresno County become a model for Restorative Justice.

Ron Claassen

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These groups, facilitated by Rochelle Edwards, operate under the auspices of the Insight Prison Project, a non profit group which facilitates education and growth opportunities for inmates. The title for the groups is Victim Offender Education Groups. Rochelle designed the small group objectives and curriculum in part based on David Doerfler's intensive training in "Victim-Centered/Offender Sensitive Dialogues in Crimes of Severe Violence."

I, Jack Dison, am privileged to be co-facilitating the current (spring 2006) group at San Quentin with Rochelle Edwards. We intend to expand the number of groups offered at San Quentin and hope to take the project to other prisons in California.

Jack Dison does restorative justice work at the California Medical Facility Prison and at San Quentin Prison. He is a graduate student in the Center for Peacemaking and Conflict Studies at FPU. He also is a retired university faculty member who taught criminology and sociology.

"It is easy to be friendly to ones friends. But to befriend the one who regards himself as your enemy is the quintessence of true religion."

-Mahatma Gandhi

* PLEASE CALL VORP AT 455-9803 IF: You *
* have time to volunteer helping coordinate projects *
* and supervising kids while they work. Or if You *
* have a project at home that you could use a little *
* help with: housekeeping, cleaning out the garage, *
* yard work, washing the car etc. *

VORP Staff

Duane Ruth-Heffelbower	Administrator
Johnny Phouthachack	Agreement Manager
Jenna Preheim	Mediation Manager
Barry Guenther	Finance Manager
Meleah Gray	Intern

VORP Board Members

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Eleanor Richards	Ron Claassen

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