

VORP News

Volume 24, Issue 10, October 2006



Restorative Justice Conference

Noelle Daoudian

The conference's "Focus on the Victim" theme was carried powerfully through the entire weekend. There were many in attendance who work in the field or had been a victim at some point. There were amazing speakers, of which I would like to highlight a few. The keynote speaker Dr. John Dusich spoke of his experiences traveling around the world working with victims, not only of crime, but of natural disasters and war, and challenged us to broaden our view of who a victim is. There were also powerful testimonies of victims of violent crime who shared the story of their loss and the pain it caused them, as well as the re-victimization which occurred as they went through the court process. Their stories were also spoke of hope, because all four had forgiven their offenders and were able to heal because of their faith in Jesus Christ. All who were in attendance were challenged to act on their new knowledge.

Mediation Abroad

- Jason Ekk

This summer I had an opportunity to go to Angola in south-west Africa to work with a non-governmental organization called the International Republican Institute for two and a half months. In Angola, IRI works with political parties, equipping/training them for the electoral process by doing things like training trainers for election monitoring, helping with the distribution of voter registration law information to remote areas, conducting surveys to help the political parties better represent their constituents and more.

Angola has had a difficult history. After the Angolans kicked out the Portuguese, who had ruled the area from the 1600s to 1975, Angola fell into a civil war that lasted until 2002. The two main sides of the civil war consisted of MPLA and UNITA. MPLA is the party that is currently in power. But, UNITA still has a lot of influence as the second most powerful party in the government.

I was asked to come along as a consultant in the area of conflict resolution. We decided to pick three of the provinces where political intolerance has been the worst, which, interestingly, are the same provinces where UNITA has historically had its stronghold. I went there and talked to the various political parties to hear what their opinions and stories were concerning the political atmosphere. The general consensus was that there was not a lot of political tolerance, but that the main problems were not in the major cities, but in the countryside where education and communication are very limited. There have been cases of intimidation, politically fueled violence and murder.

I held seminars in these provinces with various political party leaders (focusing on getting MPLA and UNITA leaders involved). In these seminars I talked about various conflict models and negotiation tactics, but the main part was facilitating conversations between the various groups on what should be done to pre-empt any future conflicts or deal with them when they come up in the future.

(Continued on next column)

Volunteer Mediator Training
November 10-11, 2006
January 12-13, 2007

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

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>

(Continued from previous column)

With their next elections possibly coming up at the end of next year, the parties were very eager to talk about ways of avoiding what happened in the 1992 elections. After the 1992 elections the civil war went from a war between the armies of MPLA and UNITA to a total war including millions of civilians. The upcoming elections will be the first since the 1992 elections.

I was amazed at the level of forgiveness that these people had. Many party leaders on all sides reiterated to me the importance of forgiveness and how they all did not want to go back to war. I heard many leaders tell me that they recognize that everyone had lost brothers and sons, but that is the exactly why they need to forgive and move on.

During one of my seminars at lunch, I overheard some of the party leaders commenting to one another that many people in the general population would not believe that people from all of these various political parties, especially MPLA and UNITA, were sitting together, eating, talking, and laughing together. Even though Angola is a scarred country, one can learn so much from their culture and their attitudes of forgiveness.

In addition to being an international mediator, Jason Ekk is a graduate of Fresno Pacific and currently is a student in the Peacemaking and Conflict Studies masters program. He is also the head mediator for Fresno Pacific's mediation program.

Letter to VORP

by Noelle Daoudian

"To Whom It May Concern:

I am the mother of a juvenile who was recently referred to your program. I did not previously know this program existed. I feel that this program had a very positive influence on my son's attitude. He is now talking about contributing to the community and trying to help make the world a better place instead of rebelling against society. I was also extremely impressed with the rapid response this program offered. The environment was appropriate, the issue was clarified, injustices recognized and resolved.

Our whole family is communicating better and we are happier as a whole. We all have an enhanced concept of civic responsibility. I am specifically impressed with the energy and kindness of (the mediator) Donald Fischer. He was a very positive influence on my son. My son connected with Donald which enabled him to look at Donald as a mentor and learn from him."

I spoke with her on the phone after we received this letter, and she said that after she wrote the letter she had met with the leader of the Graffiti Abatement Program, which her son is participating in, and stated that she was very impressed with the intuitiveness of the leader and felt reassured that this was a great place for her son to be. Additionally, her son has told her that he would like to continue volunteering at the church which hosts the Graffiti Abatement Program, even after he has fulfilled his community service hours. She reiterated that she sees a positive change in her son as a result of participating in VORP.

Our Interns

Garballe Conroe

My name is Garballe Conroe I'm an intern from Fresno State University for the VORP office. Some of my duties include verifying information by contacting offenders, sending out response letters, entering updated case information, contacting offenders and victims regarding mediation, and answering phone calls and questions regarding the VORP program. In addition, I am working on my VORP case, and trying to set up mediation between the victim and the offender. I enjoy working with VORP and must say that it is the best program that I have worked for.

Chris Jackson

Hello, my name is Chris Jackson and I'm in my senior year at Fresno State. I am a Criminology major with an option in Victimology. I decided to do my internship with VORP because I had never heard of a program that offers the services that they do, and I wanted to know more about it. Working with VORP seemed like it would be a challenge and a great experience, and so far it has been. I have been working as a case manager and have had the opportunity to be in contact with most of the mediators. I look forward to learning a lot more here with VORP.

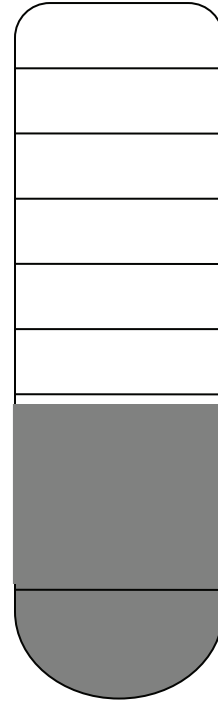
Brandi Duncan

My name is Brandi Duncan, I am a student at Fresno State with a major in Victimology. The reason I joined the Victimology program was to experience restorative justice and work together with victims and offenders. Restoring justice is exactly what VORP does. Volunteers reach out to adolescent teenagers, living a life of crime and the victims they hurt. We bring them together, mediating until a conclusion is found and things can be right again.



\$100,000

90,000
80,000
70,000
60,000
50,000
40,000
30,000
20,000
10,000



\$39,432

Matching Grant
September 2006



VORP Fundraising

PLEASE CALL VORP AT 455-9803 IF:

- You would like to donate money for our VORP youth and have them help you with any projects around the house such as: housekeeping, cleaning out the garage, yard work, washing the car, or anything else you can think of.
- 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

VORP Staff

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Johnny Phouthachack	Agreement Manager
Noelle Daoudian	Mediation Manager
Barry Guenther	Finance Manager

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