

Victim Offender Reconciliation Program

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VORP News - November 1984 - Fresno County

Thanks! This last month we received \$2,332.25 in contributions from churches and concerned individuals. The largest single donation was \$300.00 so as you can see many of you participated in this effort. This monthly amount approaches our goal of \$2,500.00. At the end of October our pledged monthly contribution stood at \$1,208.00/ Your contributions are appreciated and your suggestions on program, newsletter, financial planning, etc. are welcome and appreciated.

Last month Gail shared a case she was working on that involved the Butler Mennonite Church. Following is a follow up on that story.

In last month's newsletter I included the story of a 12 year old boy who was to work at Butler Church as restitution for a burglary he committed there. In the newsletter I indicated that the work had not yet begun so we had no idea of whether or not he would show up or do a good job. I have spoken with Jim Reimer, the custodian who has worked with him three times since then. Each time he has given me glowing reports of the boy's work, his attitude, and their time together. I spoke with Jim today and he told me that they have now completed the work and have scheduled next Saturday as a time to get together to talk over the experience and the future. The boy has asked to be allowed to write his story for the VORP Newsletter, and he and Jim will do that next Saturday. We will include it in our December newsletter. We are all quite excited to hear what Jim and the boy have to say to us.

When victim and offender get together in an atmosphere that is conducive to and invites reconciliation it is amazing what happens. The VORP process is offering this opportunity.

In the last case that I worked on the offense was listed as felony grand theft and hit and run. There were two offenders involved and only one was referred to us. It was his first offense. When we met the victim we found out that the offender was known in the neighborhood and the particular offense referred to in the case was not the greatest concern to him. His bigger concern was the escalating vandalism in the neighborhood and in his mind this boy was responsible for it. It had started when the boys had been asked not to ride their bicycles in a fig orchard because of the dust that it caused. After that there was occasional name calling and dirt thrown into a pool and other vandalism acts. One neighbor, who was the target of most of the vandalism, told the victim with whom I was meeting that he had a gun and that if any of the kids dared to come into his house or particularly if any of them bothered his wife (he traveled on his job) while he was away he would not hesitate to use it. (Fear leads to violence.) In the meeting we talked about these things in addition to the particular offense. It was agreed that this escalation was not pleasant for anyone and that while the offender said that he was not responsible for the vandalism himself, he did know who was and that he would talk to them and ask them to stop. Since then I talked with the victim and he reported that the boy and his neighbor had actually waved at each other several times in a friendly manner and that the vandalism had stopped. This boy has a lot of payments to make yet and we hope to be a continuing support to him in this and in his new direction and his relationships in the neighborhood.

Victims often feel left out and/or abused by the criminal justice system. A victim assistance bill (H.R.3498) is being considered and Howard Zehr, the person who has provided much of the vision for VORP in Elkhart, Indiana and the whole VORP movement, was asked to testify. Following is testimony presented August 2, 1984 before the House Subcommittee on Criminal Justice.

...our legal system defines crime as lawbreaking, as an offense against the state, i.e. the government. Legally it is the state which has been wronged, and it is the state which responds when a crime is committed. It is no accident, therefore, that

victims are left out of the process; only as potential witnesses are they seen as part of the equation.

In reality, however, crime is a violation of one person by another. Both victim and offender are part of the equation. Only solutions which take this meaning of crime into account can hope to genuinely meet the needs of either victim or offender.

This bill continues to assume the centrality of the state in the crime experience. It assumes that the state is the primary victim and is primarily responsible to respond. Limited help is provided for victims, but without questioning fundamentally the meaning of crime or the proper role of the state. Crime is still an offense against the state; victims remain something of an afterthought. Until the equation is changed, the possibility of real attention to victims' needs seems limited.

In September we introduced the financial plan our Board has adopted and committed themselves to implement with your help. It calls for working toward a committed income base of \$2,500 per month. The goal is to be at that level by March 1985. We wish to thank those of you who have responded to becoming a "Friend of VORP". We appreciate the new pledges and also the continuing support of many of you. Below is the financial plan and a summary of the progress made to date.

MONTHLY GIFTS GOAL	Monthly Amount	Pledged Gifts			Pledges Needed
		Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	
25 - \$10 Gifts	\$250	7	8	8	17
17 - \$15 Gifts	\$250	2	3	3	14
10 - \$25 Gifts	\$250	0	1	1	9
5 - \$50 Gifts	\$250	0	2	4	1
5 - \$100 Gifts	\$500	4	4	4	1
ANNUAL GIFTS GOAL					
24- \$250 Gifts(2 per mo.)	\$500	12	16	16	8
12--\$500 Gifts(1 per mo.)	\$500	3	3	3	9
	\$2500per mo.	\$875per mo.	\$1108per mo.	\$1208per mo.	

If you have not already made a financial commitment to VORP we would like to invite you to do that now. Please detach the form below and indicate the amount you feel is appropriate for you at this time. Please make checks payable to VORP.

.....Yes, I/We would like to be a "Friend of VORP" by investing monthly in the way indicated:

.....\$100 \$50 \$25 \$15 \$10

.....Yes, I/We would like to be a "Friend of VORP" by investing yearly in the way indicated:

.....\$500 \$250 \$100 \$50 \$25

Name:

Thank you for your recent contribution of \$100.00.