



Victim Offender Reconciliation Program

VORP News - January/February 1986

March 13, 1986 you are invited to the VORP GATHERING. The purpose of this gathering is to bring together these people who have contributed through financial contributions, volunteering, or in some other way expressed interest in VORP. VORP exists because you have made it possible. This is a time to celebrate and to hear from Howard Zehr, our guest speaker, how we fit into the larger Victim/Offender Reconciliation picture both nationally and internationally. Howard is the person who more than anyone else has provided the vision.

Consistent with our participatory program we are planning to eat a potluck meal together. Volunteering is extremely important throughout our program including our victim/offender meetings. Therefore we are inviting you to bring some food but don't want that to keep you from coming. If your last name starts with A - L please bring a main dish and rolls; M - Z bring a salad and a dessert.

In order to help us plan please call Greg Stobbe in our office by March 1, 1986 to let him know how many will be coming in your party. If you wish to invite a guest to introduce them to VORP we would welcome them.

1985 - REVIEW - this report is being devoted to looking back and summarizing our activity during the last year.

SERVICES OFFERED: We offer training to volunteers in conflict management and mediation skills, and the VORP process. Trained volunteers work with victims and offenders in cases that have been referred to us where because of some criminal act the victim has experienced a loss that could be repaid. First the volunteer meets with the offender to invite them to accept responsibility for what happened and to "make it right" with the victim. If the offender is willing then the volunteer meets the victim to invite them to participate in the process by meeting with the offender who has agreed to accept responsibility to help them understand the impact of their acts by sharing the experienced injustice. Victims have the chance to get answers to their questions and to ask if they have to worry about it happening again. If both agree to meet, the volunteer arranges and chairs a meeting. One outcome is generally a written contract for repayment of the loss. Our goal is that this process will facilitate restoration for both the victim and offender. Forgiveness and reconciliation often happen as movement from hostility toward caring is experienced by both. The process invites all of us to consider peace and reconciliation as a possibility in all of our relationships: with God, self, family, friends, community, and the world. We see it happening with victims and offenders and know it is an alternative we could choose in other relationships.

SERVICES OFFERED TO: Our case referrals have come from the Police Probation Teams as part of an informal sentence for first and second time offenders. More frequent or more serious offenses have come from Probation (acting for the Court) where it has been determined that restitution is part of their sentence. Some cases have come through a recommendation by the Alternative Sentencing Program. We ask that the VORP process be an alternative to some part or all of the sentence and not be something simply added.

In 1985 almost all (98%) of our victims and offenders were residents of Fresno County.

Service Statistics:	Number of referrals:	1983 - 89
		1984 - 206
		1985 - 315

Of the 315 cases referred to us in 1985, 39% were terminated without having a joint meeting or restitution contract after meeting with at least one party; 11% were terminated because either the victim or offender were unwilling; 17% were terminated because it was determined that no restitution was due; 11% were terminated for other no fault reasons. Both parties were contacted and met with at least once in 61% of the referrals and most of these had joint meetings: 56% had joint meetings and a contract was completed for restitution repayment; 4% completed a contract without a joint meeting, and 1% had a meeting without a contract.

The contracts amounted to \$14,046.00 in monetary restitution and 413 work hours. Of the contracts negotiated, 75% were completed, 16% are not yet due, 6% are overdue, and 3% are bad debts.

SERVICES DELIVERED BY: Midway through 1985 we set a goal, that 70% of the referrals would be handled by volunteers. We have made presentations of the program and our needs to churches and interested people, have shared the need with people they know who were interested. We have had volunteers ready to be trained in numbers adequate to meet our 1985 needs and our 70% goal in the last quarter of 1985 (actual 4th quarter 91.5%). Forty-five new volunteers were trained in 1985, twenty-three in 1984, and ten in 1983.

Gail Boldt was our case manager until she left in September. Since her replacement wasn't here yet, Greg Stobbe assumed much of her load and agreed to put some of his other responsibilities on hold until her replacement arrived. He has done a great job. I am glad to report that Christine Slonetsky (from Mennonite Voluntary Service) has now arrived. Roxanne Claassen has worked as secretary and bookkeeper on an 'as needed' basis. In addition to her excellent work she has been together with me when I've been discouraged. Her work and encouragement have been invaluable.

I have worked as program director, mediator, and trainer. I have been employed two days per week. While there are discouragements, the work has been very rewarding and I thank you for this opportunity to serve.

SERVICES GUIDED BY: Our Board of Directors decided in January that our most ideal source of funding would be private sources such as churches, individuals, businesses, etc. We also recognized that our Board membership at that time was largely involved in other programs that were requiring them to be involved in fundraising for them. This conflict prevented these members from full participation in our Board. After many meetings it was agreed by consensus that the Board structure should be changed. We decided that there would be a Finance and Policy Board as legal owners and an Advisory Board who would be available to Board members and staff for advice and counsel either collectively or individually. It was decided that each member of the policy and Finance Board would assume responsibility to help raise \$4,000 from their own contributions and those of their constituency. Collectively they are responsible for the overall program. Based on these responsibilities each member of the Board at that time chose which Board would be most appropriate for them. Those who chose to assume responsibility as an Advisory Board member were: Mary Stegall, Dave Purvis, Doug Lanier, Ken Quenzer, and Buck Levis. Those who chose to serve on the Policy and Finance Board were: Margaret Hudson, Steve Nilmeier, Duane Heffelbower, and Richard Unruh. Since that time Rudy Neufeld has joined the Policy and Finance Board. Ross Becker has also joined the Board with primary responsibility for Chairing the Tulare County Board and representing that program on the Policy and Finance Board.

SERVICES PAID FOR BY: The training for volunteers and the mediation with victims and offenders have been offered to them as a "free gift" from the "church". It has been paid for by individuals, churches, businesses, service clubs, and church agencies that share the vision. Contributors in 1985 increased in number and dollar amount.

Total cash income in 1985 (excluding Kingsview Grant and Tulare County), was \$28,478.56 compared to \$22,077.80 in 1984, \$16,874.21 in 1983, and \$2,000.00 in 1982.

In addition to cash contributions there have been many 'in kind' gifts. College Community Mennonite Brethren Church donated office space, utilities, cleaning; Pacific Printing donated brochures, bulletin inserts, business cards, newspaper, article reprints, stationery, etc.; Jeff Wall donated a desk, copy machine, and stand, miscellaneous supplies; Christian Conciliation Services donated a typewriter, miscellaneous office furniture and supplies, message machine, and second telephone line; Mark Hill has committed himself to 50 hours of computer programming.

Support for Greg Stobbe who works with us from the Mennonite Brethren Christian Service Program does not appear in the cash contributions above. That amount is approximately \$450.00 per month.

Greg Stobbe and Gail Boldt worked as volunteers on a subsistence allowance when they could have been earning much more for themselves. Their donation of time and expertise was crucial in the life of VORP.

Volunteers contributed many hours (approximately 750 hours).

Board members contributed their time (in addition to financial support reflected above).

In addition to the cash funds for Fresno County we received \$8,490.00 from Kingsview Corporation for the purpose of expansion. Most of the funds will be expended in 1986. Part of the funds will be directed to spreading the vision in Fresno County and the majority of the funds will be directed to introducing VORP in Tulare County. Mennonite Central Committee, West Coast has also contributed \$500.00 to the Tulare County program.

SERVICE EXPANSION: I made about 20 presentations to churches, service clubs, classes, public forums, etc. I was interviewed twice on the radio. Doug Hoagland accompanied Gail on a case and wrote an article in the Fresno Bee. Pacific Printing reprinted 1,000 copies for us which have been distributed. A monthly newsletter was written and sent to interested persons who had volunteered, donated financially, or signed up at a presentation. In addition, using some of the Kingsview Expansion funds, copies were sent to the persons on the Ministerial Association list for three months. About 20 responded that they wanted to continue receiving it.

We applied for and received a grant from Kingsview Corporation (through the channel of Congregation Care Associates) for expansion purposes. The main focus of that expansion is to start a Tulare County VORP. We decided that it would operate under the VORP of the Central Valley, Inc. but would have a local board to give direction to local program and finance. We decided that we were not ready to establish a separate Fresno County board at this time.

Because of the publicity and word of mouth, in 1985 forty-five people volunteered to be trained a mediators. While many of these have been Mennonite, many have come from other churches. Most have been white, only three were black. We decided that it was important to expand in the direction in having volunteers from many different churches and also representing different ethnic and cultural groups.

We decided that we would not be just a model program encouraging the system to pick it up but that we would grow and expand to handle all appropriate cases in Fresno County both juvenile and adult. We believe that because of the nature of reconciliation and the spirit of volunteerism necessary on the part of the victim and offender, that the program needs to be operated by a community based group free to make reconciliation a high priority and not part of the criminal justice system so that offenders and victims are free to not participate if that is their choice.

In talking with Don Hogner (Fresno County Chief Probation Officer) and Joe Walden (Probation Division Director) we agreed that as our capability expands we will continue to work together in offering the VORP alternative to victims and offenders. Our good working relationship with criminal justice system officials has made our expansion possible. They are also willing to encourage officials in other counties to consider VORP.

I was invited to present VORP at a California Youth Authority Transfer of Knowledge Workshop. Information has been shared with several interested people around the State.

VORP has through brief interventions had a significant impact on the lives of many victims and offenders. I believe that the impact is much greater than the amount of time spent with each person would seem to warrant. The invitation to consider resolution and restoration as an alternative to continued bitterness and greater punishment which is unrelated to the incident or victim is generally welcomed by both victim and offender. We have had an evaluation which is sent out randomly to victims and offenders and some of the results are summarized below:

Offenders - Did the meeting help you to 'make it right' with the victim and yourself?
(1 not at all - to 5 fully resolved) Average: 4.5

Was the restitution agreement satisfactory?
(1 dissatisfactory - to 5 very satisfactory) Average: 5

Victims - Was the restitution agreement satisfactory?
(1 dissatisfactory - to 5 very satisfactory) Average: 4.5

Was the meeting helpful in getting answers to your questions?
(1 no help - to 5 very helpful) Average: 4

Would you recommend a VORP meeting to a friend who was a victim of a similar crime?
(1 recommend against - to 5 highly recommend) Average: 4.5

Thanks again for your prayers and support. Let's continue to invite accepting responsibility, good communication efforts, restoration and reconciliation in all of our relationships.

Shalom, Ron Claassen

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