

## Progress Being Made on Referral System for Adult VORP Cases

Growth Continues!! A referral system for Adult VORP cases is being developed in Fresno County. Based on advice from a group of community leaders and a \$2,000 grant from the First Presbyterian Church, work began this summer and the first cases are now being completed.

In the fall of 1992, Mr. James Rowland, former director of the California Department of Corrections, convened a group of community leaders to look at what VORP had done in its first ten years and to make some recommendations regarding what they thought VORP should be doing during the next ten years. Two of the eight recommendations were:

1. To continue expansion of the juvenile VORP to be able to eventually handle all appropriate cases (approximately four times the current size).
2. To develop an adult VORP beginning with a pilot program in the summer of 1993.

Knowing that VORP would need additional staff time to develop the adult referral and case management system, Mr. Rowland went to his church Justice Committee and proposed that they provide the initial funding. The First Presbyterian Church provided \$2,000.

We are glad to report that our Criminal Justice leaders; Mr. Ed Hunt (District Attorney), Mr. Jose Villarreal (Public Defender), and Mr. Verne Speirs (Chief Probation Officer); all indicated their support for an adult VORP and have encouraged their staff to help in the development of a referral system. Several Superior Court judges, especially those who have rotated through the Juvenile Court have also encouraged VORP to expand to include adult cases.

Our VORP story this month is an adult case. Mike Manghera is a member of our Board of Directors, a member of the Newman Center, and has been a very active volunteer mediator since 1989. Mike helps out in so many ways that we couldn't possibly list them all but I would like to use this opportunity to express our gratitude. The names and some details have been changed to protect identities.

Roy had met John while each were socializing at a local bar. Sometime around midnight John suggested to Roy that the two continue the "party" at John's apartment and Roy obliged. After a couple hours of more drinking and socializing at the apartment, John succumbed to the penalty for overindulgence (he passed out). As Roy had gotten to John's apartment by way of John's vehicle, Roy felt it appropriate to leave the apartment by way of

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John's vehicle even if it meant leaving without John or his permission to use the vehicle. By early morning John realized his truck as well as his keys and money from his wallet had been taken and he notified the police. Roy continued to "use" the pickup for two weeks until he was arrested for auto theft after having been spotted with the truck by local authorities.

I met with Roy first. He was anxious to participate and honest in his reporting that as his case had not yet gone to trial he hoped that cooperating with VORP would keep him out of jail. He stated that he was apprehensive about meeting with John, whom he had not seen since the night at the apartment.

I next met with John and told him that Roy was willing to meet to discuss restitution. I was impressed by John's lack of anger towards Roy. John was willing to meet Roy to discuss the impact the theft had had both financially and emotionally. John focused on "why me?", a question he was anxious to ask Roy.

At the joint meeting John was well prepared, he had his receipts as well as the dollar amount total and he was articulate in his presentation of the repercussions the theft had had on his life at that time. As in the individual meeting, he did not show anger but continued to remain focused with Roy in his pursuit of an answer for "why me?". Roy was less prepared and having been employed only sporadically since the theft, was unsure of his ability to fulfill any agreed upon commitment for restitution. The two eventually agreed to a \$40.00/mo. payment for a \$1200.00 debt to be reviewed in a follow-up meeting at the VORP office in six months to assess Roy's fulfillment of the agreement.

Roy assured John that it would not happen again.

At the conclusion of the meeting Roy couldn't make it out the door fast enough, never taking a glance back. John followed quickly behind. As I was the last to leave I witnessed John catching up with Roy in the parking lot. I watched long enough to see John extend his hand and Roy responding with a hand shake.

I have been mediating for VORP for 5 years and am always humbled by conclusions such as this where I am reminded that although I and VORP can help work out restitution agreements and create the opportunity, the capacity to reconcile is a gift harbored within us. To reconcile injustices between fellow human beings becomes a matter of personal responsibility. Reconciliation emerges as a by-product of the VORP process and a relationship already begun by the victim and the offender. Mediators simply encourage the relationship.

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Thanks Mike!!!!

Cooperative Agreements and Reconciliation like the one in the story above between victim and offender rarely happen without the encouragement and help of a VORP mediator. More Volunteer VORP mediators are needed. Our basic VORP training prepares a mediator for working with juvenile cases. Additional training is provided for those wanting to work with adult cases. The next training events are scheduled for February 1, 8, and 15; March 11 and 12; and May 9, 16, and 23.

Cost is \$15 (materials) for those who work with VORP cases. \$75 for others who just want the training. All are welcome. Pre-registration is required. The number of participants is limited. Call Linda or Barbara to register.

**Last Month Vorp Did Not Receive Enough To Cover All Expenses And Our Small Reserve Is Gone!!! VORP Relies Entirely On Your Contributions!! Now Is The Time To Support Peacemaking And Reconciliation With Your Finances!!!! We Were \$800 Short!!!! If Everyone Receiving This Newsletter Gave \$20 This Month, VORP Could Cover Its Annual Budget In One Month!!!! Thank You For Your Investment And Your Prayers!!!!**

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**Victim Offender Reconciliation Program**

