

VORP NEWS

A Monthly Newsletter of the Victim Offender Recon-

Victim Releases Offender From A \$2,000.00 Debt!

by Jay Griffith

Maria Contreras, a 14 year old run-a-way, together with her two friends, Donna and Renee, 14 and 15, stole an electrician's van from a local school. The keys left in the van proved too tempting for them.

After a week of eluding the police and family, the three were apprehended. \$2,000 in damages were later reported to be done to the van and its equipment.

At the VORP mediation, Doua Long, the Project Manager for EFX, Inc., would decide to forgive the \$2,000 debt. The reason: he was thankful for the fact that Maria's mother, Genelle, made the extremely difficult decision to report her own daughter to the police and call the school as soon as she learned what happened. He said for himself and his company this act and the returning of the van was justice enough.

Privately, Doua shared with me that he knew poverty himself, what it can do to people, and the hardships it can create. He also wanted those involved to know God's mercy.

Doua's calm and understanding presence at the mediation spoke loudly to Maria and Genelle. Many times in the meeting you could see how grateful they were for his gentleness and understanding towards them.

Maria had already begun to make changes shortly after the incident. A big motivation for her was that she might be taken away from her family.

Genelle too was making some changes; she wanted to do whatever she could to make herself a better parent and mother. She was also making sure they were

doing all that the court was asking of them.

At the court's review of our mediation, the judge decided to add 100 hours of community service to Maria's mediated agreements.

Maria was still thankful however, because her fears were faced and overcome, first with the victim and then with the courts; she was at peace with the victim and she wouldn't be removed from her family.



VORP helped Maria locate some community service locations. She was given letters of introduction to a local church and a City Council candidate's office. Surprisingly, both Maria and Genelle are now volunteering their time together for this local politician.

It was the kind of forgiveness God is known for — "Our debt paid in full!" — A rare experience in our justice system, and in life.

Amazing things can happen when people are given the freedom to decide for themselves what 'justice' means for them.

For now, the sincerity of Maria and Genelle will be seen in their actions. If they follow through on their promises, the State will be satisfied, the actual victim of the crime will be satisfied and justice will have been served in our community.

Over the next four months, VORP will be reporting their pro-

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gress to Probation and the Court. **Please pray for them.**



NORTHWEST CHURCH BLESSES VORP (Again)!

VORP has been tremendously blessed this past month by the generous commitment of Pastor Bufe Karraker and Northwest Church.

Earlier this year Northwest's Missions Board decided to increase its annual giving to VORP. This past month, Bufe committed to VORP his church's support for the next year with our direct mailing efforts. This included assistance from:

Mike Thielen of Mike Thielen & Associates who creatively updated VORP's logo. **(Please write, call or e-mail us with your comments about this logo design).**

Together with the help of **Dulco Printing**, new letterhead was made and mailing and return envelopes were given a crisp, professional look. Some great looking Business cards were even included as a courtesy.

Northwest's gift is making it possible for VORP to do more ministry in our community.

Thank you: Bufe, Mike, and those at Dulco Printing: Howard & Karen Dull and Wendy Freeman!

Save The Dates

Our Fall Trainings Are On:

Sept. 8th & 9th

Friday: 6:30 PM—9:30 PM
Saturday: 8:30 AM—3:30 PM

Oct. 12th, 13th & 14th

Thursday & Friday: 6:30 PM—
9:30PM
Saturday: 8:30 AM—11:30AM

Nov. 10th & 11th

Friday: 6:30 PM—9:30 PM
Saturday: 8:30 AM—3:30 PM

Learn to be a volunteer peacemaker/mediator. The cost is \$20 for 9 hours of classroom training and 8 hours of field training as you work your first case. We only ask that you serve as a mediator on 2 additional cases sometime during your first year.

You can make a difference in the lives of victims and offenders of juvenile crime in our community.

Call the VORP office at
559-291-1120
to register today!

Special Thanks To Our Direct Mail Helpers

We'd like to thank the following people for donating their time and effort in helping us to print, stuff, mail, and cleanse our 3,400 piece direct mail project in early August.

Thank you: Jenny Alcantara, Judith-Ann Calandra, Alice Griffith, Teresa Lovelace, Corine Ross, Deborah Thomas-Smith and John Wiens.

Your friendship and generosity enables us to be better stewards of this work we've been given.

'VORP Benefit' Raises New Friends & \$2,500

On August 3rd, VORP held its program benefit at Second Space Theater, in the Tower.

Those who gathered enjoyed a humorous play about finding love and mending relationships in the 1950s. The event also helped VORP to build toward hiring some new Staff help for this fall.

Those attending heard from their host, and the event's organizer, Leah Ann Alcazar. Leah Ann shared with the group a little about the on-going work of VORP in the community, from the vantage point of her work as a Deputy Attorney General for the California Department of Justice, and as recently elected Chair of the VORP Board.

On behalf of the VORP Board, Staff and Contributors, we would like to thank our corporate sponsors:

- Bolen Fransen, & Boostrom, LLP
- The 2nd Space Theater and Good Company Players for their excellent presentation of the play "Proposals"
- Margaret Hudson for her uplifting sculpture, "The Lion and the Lamb," for our raffle
- Fresno Village Florist
- Starbucks Coffee Company
- All those who made the yummy desserts.

SURVEY OF CALIFORNIA VORP PROGRAMS CONFIRMS BENEFITS OF MEDIATION

In May 2000, the Judicial Council of California released its year-long study of six (6) of California's 26 Victim Offender Programs (VOPs).

The study revealed what VORP and other restorative justice and mediation practitioners have known for years — mediation works!

The study reported that:

1. Youth who participated in mediation were much less likely to re-offend in the future than those who did not go through the mediation process.
2. Youth who went through mediation were much more likely to repay the victim for damages; and
3. Victims who participated were much more likely to be satisfied that justice was done, than those participating in traditional justice processes.

Your gifts to our program are making all this possible.

God Bless you!

Volunteers, Staff Support & Staff

- * Our VORP Volunteer Community Mediators
- * Oasis (Older Adult Social Services) — Newsletter Preparation
- * Jay Griffith, Leah Ann Alcazar — Newsletter Publishing/Editing
- * John Wiens — Finance/Reparations Manager
- * Case & Reparations Management, Staff & Office Support — Jay Griffith and John Wiens

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