

VORP NEWS

A Monthly Newsletter of the Victim Offender Reconciliation Program

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ABOUT VORP

We are a church and community based program serving victims and offenders of juvenile crime. Through the use of mediation, we invite victims and offenders to meet and discuss how to best address an offense, and how to keep it from happening again in the future. Agreements are monitored by the participants, VORP and the Fresno County Probation Department.

**Come
visit &
enjoy a
cup of Jo'
with us!**



Bi-Lingual Mediation Satisfies Victims' Needs

Written by Doug Noll & Jay Griffith

One evening last fall, three teenage friends, one white, one black and the other hispanic, all entered a neighboring apartment complex and burglarized four separate garages. Car stereos, tools, and other miscellaneous personal property were stolen.

The Court had decided that this would be an appropriate case to refer to VORP to mediate as a Community Justice Conference (CJC). These are larger group mediations which make participant recommendations to the court regarding sentencing.

Doug Noll, one of our experienced volunteer mediators was contacted by VORP. He met with the offenders and then the four victims.

The victims were all Hispanic families. None spoke English, so VORP arranged for one of our Spanish speaking mediators, Gigi Stone, to interpret.

Also, present were several Alliant University (counseling) students observing the mediation process.

Doug made introductions and gave an opening statement, which

Volunteer Mediator Training Calendar (Winter/Spring) "2001"

February 2 & 3

Friday-6:30 to 9:30p
Saturday-8:30a to 3:30p

March 2 & 3

Friday-6:30p to 9:30p
Saturday-8:30a to 3:30p

April 27 & 28

Friday-6:30p to 9:30p
Saturday-8:30a to 3:30p

The cost is \$20.00 for 9 hours of training and 8 hours of field work as you do your first case.

We only ask that you serve as a mediator on 2 additional cases sometime during your first year.

**LEARN TO VALUE & CARE
FOR PEOPLE IN CONFLICT**

**TO REGISTER:
CALL THE VORP OFFICE
TODAY!
#291-1120**

was translated. Stories were exchanged by both the offenders and victims.

Next, the parties discussed what the victims' needs were. To the surprise of both the offenders and the students the victims, simply but persuasively, voiced that their primary concern was for peace and security in their neighborhood. The offenders were quite affected by this and gave very sincere apologies for what they had done.

At this point the discussion moved toward meaningful ways to repair the wrong. This was conducted entirely in Spanish.

Doug watched the body language and listened to the tone of voices for signs of problems. He would occasionally ask for a quick summary in English of what was occurring. When the participants became stuck, they would ask him for advice on how to move on. He provided guidance on possible options and they continued their discussions.

Eventually they reached a series of agreements under which the stolen goods would be replaced and the offenders

How A Faith Response Addresses Crime

By Joby Dupuis, Member
VORP Board of Directors

As we begin the new year, I pause to consider what this new year might bring. The world around me can be depressing and overwhelming. Yet, God's miracles are ever present. Despite the glaring headlines, news lead-ins and political hyperbole which focus on all that is wrong, God's people are busy and creative doing kingdom work.

VORP is an example of work being done by those who are faithful. Many come to offer the gift of peace to those in conflict. Reconciliation is presented as a positive healing alternative to punishment and alienation. Young people are challenged to acknowledge their mistakes and

**VORP Anticipates
Move.
Office Space
funds needing
to be Raised.**

For 18 years VORP has had the privilege of having its Staff Office located at College Community Mennonite Church in Clovis.

We wish to express our gratitude to them for their generosity with office and storage space, affordable rent and utilities, and good relations over these years. God bless your expanding Christian Education program.

By April 1st, 2001, VORP will need to move into a new office space.

Ideally, VORP would prefer to relocate into a "central Fresno" church. Our needs are for 1,000 square feet for our staff, mediation and storage needs.

For the past two months we have looked into a number of church and commercial sites.

If we had 60 people regularly donate \$10 per month we could easily move into a centrally located commercial site.

Or, if your church could envision seeing VORP continue its ministry through them, call us!

To Contact Us:

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**VORP BANQUET
March 9, 2001
In Honor of Ron Claassen**

You are invited to a special VORP celebration to be held on March 9 at Grand Occasions in Fresno.

This special dinner will celebrate the vision of VORP founder Ron Claassen and the ministry of VORP in Fresno for the last 18 years.

Mark your calendar now and join us for this joyous night of thanksgiving!

For more information,
call the VORP office.
Tickets are \$50.00 per person.

**Faith Responds to Crime
(continued from front page)**

hurtful acts, and to take responsibility for making things right. At VORP, we watch young people draw strength they did not know they had and take pride in the good they did not know was in them. We watch victims become whole and abate the anger which boils within them. At VORP, these are the miracles God provides.

As an attorney, I am more aware than most how often people who are frightened and confused seek to distance themselves from problems by turning them over to someone else, and how an overloaded judicial system is asked to deal

with family, neighborhood and school problems it is not equipped to undertake. The Bible teaches these are problems best suited for resolution within relationships.

VORP reminds us that relationships area what make us human and forgiveness in the context of reconciliation is what

**Bi-Lingual Mediation
(continued from front page)**

would work off the debt by helping out in one offender's uncle's furniture moving business. The young men gave further assurances that this would never happen again, and the agreements were put into writing.

Everyone seemed pleased with the results. However, the student observers expressed concern that the victims had given up more than they had to.

Doug pointed the students back to what happened. The victims had received what they really wanted—assurances of security and safety in their neighborhood, and the offenders were willing to make things as right as possible.

Upon reflection, seeing the handshakes and smiles all around, it was evident to the students that this conference process had made a difference for these families.

Thank you Doug & Gigi.
Blessed are the Peacemakers!

VORP STAFF & VOLUNTEERS

Church & Community Volunteers — Our VORP Mediators
Sengthiene Bosavanh — Mediation & Agreement Management
John Wiens — Finance & Office Management
Rebecca Young — Staff Office Volunteer
Oasis (Older Adult Social Services) — Newsletter Prep.
Dulco Printing — Newsletter Printing
Leah Ann Alcazar — Newsletter Editing

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