

VORP is a Community Building Process

by Ron Claassen

VORP meetings range from a minimum of 3 or 4 people: victim, offender (offender's parent or other responsible adult if juvenile offender), and mediator, to as many as 20 including extended family, victim support, community and faith community representatives, and government representatives. (We call this larger group process a Community Justice Conference—CJC.)

If all are willing, the VORP mediator leads the group in a peacemaking process to:

(1) recognize the injustices (tell/listen/clarify/summarize the events and impact in the violation and offender accepting responsibility);

(2) restore the equity or balance between them as much as possible (agree on what can be done to make things as right as possible now—realizing that to some extent this is always symbolic, restoring equity is a combination of restitution and grace); and

(3) clarify future intentions (establish plans, commitments, and accountability process for a safer, more respectful, and more just future).

When individuals and the group agree that this process has been completed, forgiveness and reconciliation begin to happen and trust starts to grow. Victim, offender, and community members experience restoration and re-integration. Follow-up is important because as agreements are kept, trust grows.

VORP is a community building process. VORP is a character building process. VORP clarifies and strengthens community values. VORP is a peacemaking process.

VORP, now starting its 16th year in Fresno, happens because of the efforts of many people. The primary support and initiative for VORP have come from churches and individuals who understand and care that God's desire is for people to experience shalom, peace and justice as a result of right relationships between individuals and with God.

41 Churches Are Sustaining Friends with VORP

These churches have formalized their mutually supportive relationship with VORP. If your church is listed below, thanks. If your church is not listed below, please contact Elaine Enns (455-5843) or Jay Griffith (291-1120).

VORP Sustaining Friend Churches in 1997 were: Baptist Temple Church, Bethany Church, Bethel Temple Church, Butler Avenue Church, Campus Baptist Church, College Church of Christ, College Community Church, College Congregational Church, Downtown Church, Easton Southern Baptist Church, Faith United Methodist Fellowship, First Congregational Church, First Mennonite Church, Reedley, First Presbyterian Church, Fresno Christian Reformed Church, Fresno Christian Fellowship Church, Friends Community Church.

God's Family Church, Harmony Freewill Baptist Church, Iglesia De Dios, Memorial United Methodist Church, Mennonite Com-

munity Church, New Hope Community Church, North Fresno Church, Northpark Community Church, Northwest Church, Our Lady of Victory, The Peoples Church, Pilgrim Armenian Congregational Church.

Redeemer Lutheran Church, Reedley Mennonite Brethren Church, Sanger First Presbyterian Church, Second Baptist Church, St. Columba's Episcopal Church, St. Luke's United Methodist Church, St. Paul Newman Center, Trinity Lutheran Church, United Japanese Christian Church, Valley Christian Center, Wesley United Methodist Church, and Westside Church of God.

Staff Transition Is Part of Our Lives

Staff transition is part of our lives because VORP relies heavily on short-term (usually less than two years) volunteers. Although they are short term, they serve with energy and enthusiasm combined with high level skills and competency.

Phil and Julie Bender served as short term volunteers with VORP while they were between assignments as pastors. They served between March and July. They filled a very important role for us while we were waiting for Amy to arrive. They have returned to pastor a church in Ontario, Canada.

Jamie Metzler, from Pennsylvania, volunteered part-time from January to July. For several years Jamie has worked for a period of time to earn enough money to volunteer for a period of time. We are grateful for his work with us. He moved to Indiana to volunteer for a community mediation center.

Julius Lockett was a full time employee, funded by a grant, from January 1996 to May 1997. We were sorry to have the grant money for him run out. He is now a teacher at the

boot camp and continues to take cases as a volunteer mediator.

Laura Fultz, who had worked with VORP for several years, first as a volunteer and later as an employee, left VORP in February to take a position with OASIS. Laura is continuing to serve as volunteer coordinator of the VORP Auxiliary, which in the fall put on a wonderful fundraising event of theater, silent auction, Margaret Hudson sculpture raffle, and refreshments. Laura contributed a lot to VORP over the years and we miss her cheerful presence.

Amy Detwiler arrived at VORP in September. She is a full time volunteer with the Mennonite Voluntary Service program and has assumed primary responsibility for case management. Amy has systematically mastered her responsibilities while contributing a wonderfully cooperative spirit. Amy is a recent graduate of Bluffton College in Bluffton, Ohio, where her major was social work and minor was criminology.

Victoria Buksbaze is in her second year with VORP. She is a full time volunteer with the Mennonite Voluntary Service program and is assuming primary responsibility for follow-up in addition to many other responsibilities. Victoria brings a wonderful sense of humor along with her dedication and competency. Victoria is from New York and is a recent graduate of State University of New York at Geneseo.

Jay Griffith is continuing his work with VORP and is now employed full time. Jay is responsible for our CJC cases and has also assumed significant responsibility in working with our Sustaining Friend Churches. We are grateful for Jay's willingness to serve in this way and enjoy his cooperative spirit.

VORP continued to contract for some time from several members of the faculty at Fresno Pacific University's Center Peacemaking and Conflict Studies. Elaine Enns (now in her eighth year with VORP), Duane Ruth-Heffelbower (an attorney, formerly a VORP board member), and Ron Claassen (founding director) all work with VORP part time.

VORP Board of Directors Assumes Both Financial and Policy Responsibility

VORP is organized as a non-profit, public benefit corporation which is guided by a board of directors who come from a wide range of churches in the area. Board members shoulder significant responsibility so that hundreds can serve as mediators and thousands of victims and offenders can have the opportunity to experience Restorative Justice.

Our current and continuing board members are: Dave Kleschold, President; Michael Blue, Vice President; Carol Fransen, Secretary Treasurer; Mike Manghera; and Ron Claassen. New board members this year are Leah Ann Alcazar and Mary Beth Hogan.

Thanks again to those who are currently serving, are considering serving, and to all those who have served in the past.

**VOLUNTEER MEDIATORS
NEEDED!**
VORP mediators learn and practice peacemaking skills they can use in the home, workplace, and congregation.

The next trainings are scheduled on March 16, 23 & 30; April 17 & 18; and May 7, 14 & 21.

Call Victoria at 291-1120 for details.

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VORP Mediators Are Volunteers Who Put Their Values and Faith into Action

Volunteer VORP Mediators give up personal time to help victims, offenders, and the community work constructively in what otherwise seems like a totally negative experience. 1997 VORP mediators were: Bill Armstrong, Gilda Arreguin, Charles Arokiasmy, Ed Barton, Susan Bechara, Julie Bender, Phil Bender, Michael Blue, Arthur Borders Jr., Stella Botello, Ginny Bradley, Nichole Brigham, David Brown, Victoria Buksbazen, Julie Butchert, Tony Byrd, Florine Cash, Sylvia Castro, Ron Claassen, Roxanne Claassen, Jeremy Clift, Robert Cobb, Heather Compton, Eva Cooper, Margarita Covarrubias, Audrey Day, Amy Detwiler, Michael Dunn.

Helen Ens, Lowell Ens, Elaine Enns, Wayne Elenke, Mary Elizando, Rosalyn Estrada,

Melanie Evert, Renee Ezelle, Delila Figueroa, Laura Fultz, Richard Gaston, Jon Glover, Susan Glover, Jay Griffith, Judythe Guarnera, Elizabeth Guerrero, Robin Hall, George Harper, Harlan Hansen, Coral Henry, Sharyn Higgins, Marybeth Hogan, Dawn Howe.

Norma Jackson, Mary Janzen, Cory Jasso, Beverly Jim, Suzanne Jost, Ara Kahrimanian, David Kleschold, Susan Kliewer, Kathleen Kuczler, Charlotte Lawrence, Jerry Linscheid, Frances Lippman, Ellie Lockett, Julius Lockett, Ted Loewen, Reeve Longshore, Richard Lorentzen, Reeve Martin, Angee Matthews, Gail Marshall, Elmer Martins, Kristi McCormick, Dale McNeil, James Merson, Jamie Metzler, Donna Middleton, Laurie Mitchell, Gail Monson, John Montejano, Vincent Motto, John Nash, Dan Neufeld, Gladys Neufeld, Monica Nolasco, Amanda Nunez.

Trophy Olson, Simone Ostrander, Larry Patton, Steve Penner, Shirley Peters, Brent Pollitt, Marie Prinz, Mary Proctor, Carol Pryor, Galen Quenzer, Tony Redfern, Audrey Redmond, Tom Reyes, Linda Richardson, Mindy Rose, Jennifer Rush, Michael Russell, Sylvia Schultz, Ann Scott, Jacqueline Sichon, Patti Silva, Melissa Silva, Maryann Tapia, Jennifer Tapley, Julie Tex, Norma Tilley, Wendy Turley, Orland Uranga, Rita Uranga, Robert Volpp-Garcia, Karen Wagner, Sarah Watters, Susan Wilson, Caroline Wilson, Arthur Wint, and Raymond Winter III.

"Blessed are the Peacemakers."

Referrals Were Received Primarily from Criminal Justice Officials

Most referrals were from Juvenile Probation as a diversion for non-violent first and second time offenders and for more serious offenses from the court as part of a sentence. Some adult referrals were received from the courts. A few case referrals were made by police. Occasionally we receive a self referral (either victim or offender), and these tend to be the most serious cases we receive. For example, I am currently working with a case involving an incarcerated offender, his family, and the brother and pastor of a victim who was killed in a drunk driving crash. 569 referrals were received in 1997.

Special thanks to Larry Price (Chief Probation Officer), Phil Erdman (Probation Restorative Justice Coordinator) and all of the criminal justice officials who made referrals or in

some other way helped us to do our job. VORP couldn't work without your support. We recognize the wealth of experience and wisdom among you. We appreciate your co-operation, advice, and counsel.

Financial Contributors Are Essential Partners

Because of your generous giving, and using our small reserve from 1996, VORP income slightly exceeded expenses. This is a miracle, given how it looked at the beginning of November. Thank you!

Without your support VORP would not exist in Fresno. The ongoing stability of VORP has been those individuals and churches who have so faithfully continued to contribute year after year and those who have joined more recently.

1997 income was \$63,551: 12.5 percent from board members, 49.5 percent from individuals, 19 percent from churches, 5 percent from fund-raising events, 8.8 percent from various grants, 2.3 percent from training events, and 2.9 percent from honorariums, etc.

On behalf of all of us at VORP, we thank all of you for making Victim Offender Reconciliation a reality in Fresno County.

Thanks also to College Community Church for office space, Pacific Printing for special printing assistance, Mark Roy for newsletter layout, Oasis for preparing the newsletter for mailing, and David Kleschold for maintaining our computers.

The VORP Auxiliary Helped with Fund-raising

The VORP Auxiliary benefited VORP through several fund-raising efforts. The evening at the theater, "A Christmas Carol," with gourmet coffee, specialty desserts, silent auction, and raffle was a very special fun event also designed to educate about and benefit VORP.

Special sponsors for the evening were the law firm of Bolen, Fransen, and Boostrom, and Margaret Hudson's Earth Arts Studio. Auxiliary members were Leah Ann Alcazar, Carol Fransen, Carol Pryor, and Laura Fultz.

VORP RELIES ON YOU!

**Please don't wait.
VORP can only grow if
financial support
grows. If you aren't
actively supporting
VORP with volunteer
time, prayer, or finan-
cial support, we are
praying that this will be
the year you start.**

The need is great!

VORP

**VICTIM OFFENDER RECONCILIATION PROGRAM
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