



News

Victim Offender Reconciliation Program
of the Central Valley, Inc.

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SUMMER HAS BEGUN!

From the Administrator

VORP continues to provide the opportunity for people to gain new perspectives on crime and punishment by participating directly in the process of helping victims and offenders to decide what must happen for things to be made as right as possible between them. Fresno State intern Jane Yang reflects on her experience in this newsletter.

We want to offer this opportunity to as many people as possible. Enclosed in this newsletter is a copy of VORP's current brochure. Maybe you or someone you know would like to get involved or re-involved with VORP. VORP has always relied on individual and church contributions for most of its budget, and we thank our faithful supporters for remembering us.

So far this year we have received 55 cases, or an average of about 11 each month. We would like to increase the number and are working with our referral sources to do this. The support of our mediators and donors is what makes it possible. Thanks again to all of you.

- Duane Ruth-Heffelbower

Case story from Johnny Phouthachak

In May 2000, an offender entered a vacant home that was for sale. The minor vandalized the residence, and the damage caused came to thousands of dollars to have it repaired. The offender and family then had the opportunity to participate in a VORP mediation. During the mediation the victim, offender, and their families established an agreement. The minor agreed to pay \$11,500 at the rate of \$100.00 every week.

As the VORP Agreement Manager, I continued to monitor the agreement progress. At first it was frustrating to work on this case, because the offender was not motivated enough to complete the agreement. I do not blame him, especially because he is only 15 years old. He could not even get a driver license or find a steady job. The problem became even bigger when I found out that he was having family problems and lacked family support. I did not give up on him and continued to motivate him to complete the agreement. Family encouragement and support is necessary for offenders to complete their agreements, and completing agreements is an important part of the VORP process.

I arranged a meeting with the offender's family. During the family meeting we discussed the offender's needs and concerns.

Some of the things the parents were concerned about were inadequate finances within the family and lack of community resources to help the minor find a job.

In order to start somewhere with the new agreement, we set workable goals and plans to have the offender be more committed in completing his agreement. The offender agreed to have an individual meeting with me to seek employment support. The offender also agreed to have better communication with VORP and with his family.

The offender was very motivated and worked hard on goals. He improved in communicating with his family and contacted VORP every week to report about his progress. The offender soon found a job and is currently completing his agreement on time. While participating with VORP, he also experienced academic improvements. I was very satisfied with his progress and felt good to have a role in his success.

Reflection of VORP

Hi, my name is Jane Yang and currently I am volunteering at VORP as an intern from Fresno State. I am a recent graduate with a Bachelors in Criminology and an emphasis in Victimology. I heard about this program from the internship program and so far it has proved to be a great learning experience. I currently hold a Victim's Service Certificate,

and for me to have this opportunity to work directly with the victim and offender is a great way to put my education and skills to work. This is the first time I have been working with any offenders directly, and it has proved to me that VORP offers an excellent opportunity for offenders. I really believe in this program, because it offers the offender as well as the victim the opportunity to deal with the offense among them versus with the court system interfering. I know from previous experience with the criminal justice system, that victims are rarely given the chance to have any input regarding the offender's sentence or restitution. VORP makes this chance available to the victim. The victim's voice has an opportunity to be heard by the offender. Another great aspect of VORP is that it offers alternatives for the offender, it assures the offenders that we care for them and their well-being. VORP believes in the offender and lets them know that they can learn and change their behavior. VORP holds the offender fully responsible for their actions, allowing the victim to be heard as well as to have an input in how the offender could make things right with the victim and the community.

VORP Staff

Leah Valencia recently joined our VORP staff. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Criminology with an emphasis in Victimology. She interned at VORP in 2002.



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