



News

Volume 22, Issue 10 December 2004

From the Administrator

My granddaughter is learning the Lord's Prayer these days, and that led me to reflect on it for our VORP staff devotional time today. The Matthew 6 version in NIV starts out: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." That's a lofty thought, that we want our world to be a place where things are the way God wants them. That isn't the way the world is these days, not even close. Those of us who bring victims and offenders together do get a taste of what it would be like for the world to be the way God wants it to be. God desires *shalom* for us. *Shalom* is the kind of peace that exists when everything is as it should be. People's needs are met and relationships are as they should be. That is what we often call the magic of VORP, the calm peacefulness and good feeling that come over participants when offenders take responsibility for their actions, do what they can to meet the victim's needs, and the victim responds with newly built trust.

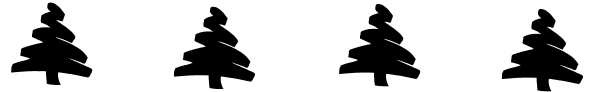
The prayer goes on "Give us today our daily bread." It doesn't say our monthly bread. Our reliance on God for our needs is to be constant, daily. There is no assumption that we should have the security of stockpiles for weeks or months to come, since that would lead us to believe we are self-sufficient, not needing God. VORP has been very aware of the need for daily bread from its inception. The program has never had large long-term grants or any other assurance that there will be bread the day after tomorrow. Each day we go to the mailbox to see whether our daily bread has come, and it has usually been there. That has been the case for over twenty years, and we are grateful for it. The only time it has been a problem is when we are looking for yesterday's bread, or even the day before yesterday. That's been our experience lately, and we are hopeful that you can be part of changing the situation. The work goes on.

Then the prayer takes a more difficult turn: "Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one." Our victim clients have been beaten over the head with this one by the time they come to us. They can begin to see "forgiveness" as the "F" word. Knowing this, we never suggest that victims need to forgive. All we do is offer a process that we know leads people in the direction of forgiveness. What they make of it is up to them. Our desire is that our clients find healing and reconciliation, but our job is to offer a trustworthy process, not to worry about the outcome. For us the temptation to be resisted is trying to control the outcome of what we offer. James Fenhagen wrote: "Until I die to the need to control the outcome of what I offer to another, I cannot love." At this season when we remember God sending love into our world, those words are a good reminder. Blessings on you this Christmas season.

Victim Offender Reconciliation Program of the Central Valley, Inc.

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Happy Holidays!



A Mediation Story by Dan Rowley, Esq.

I was recently asked to handle a mediation involving a young man that had been caught by security cameras at a local mall scratching a tile wall with a quarter while talking on the telephone. When I met with the offender and his mother I learned that the young man had previously been caught doing graffiti a couple of times. The mother informed me that her son used to be a straight "A" student, but was now on the verge of flunking out of continuation school. She also claimed that he was basically a good kid, but was beginning to cause her a lot of grief. She and her son were willing to participate in the program; however, she was not sure it would do any good because of her son's attitude.

When I met with the head of security for the local mall I learned that he was a retired Chief of Police who was very familiar with juvenile crime, but unfamiliar with VORP. He was very receptive to participating in the program and interested in trying to help the offender turn his life around.

The joint meeting was very interesting. Once the mom was done telling us about all of the problems she has had with her son, the former Police Chief focused on establishing a rapport with and getting to know the offender. Specifically, he focused on the lack of effort the offender was making toward his education. While it took a little prying, the offender opened up and acknowledged that he was basically coasting through life and had no motivation or direction. Although he was willing to get a job to pay for the damage (and earn some spending money), the former Police Chief pointed out that a good education was much more important than a minimum wage, go nowhere job. The former Police Chief then offered to waive restitution in exchange for the offender raising his grades and reporting to him each week about his attendance at and effort in school. The offender agreed and we set a follow up meeting for early November to see how the offender was doing.

When the time for the follow up meeting arrived the offender called and informed me that because his mother was ill the meeting would have to be rescheduled. He proudly volunteered that his grades were up and he was no longer skipping school. I congratulated him and encouraged him to keep it up. When I contacted the former Police Chief about rescheduling the meeting he told me that the offender had called almost every week and left voice mail messages about his schooling. It appeared to him that the offender was keeping his commitment and making good decisions.

The power of this program is in the process. When people actually get together and share their experiences, lives can be changed. Thanks to VORP, and the insight of a retired police chief, this offender has begun making changes that can create tremendous, positive change in his life.

Volunteer Mediator Training
 January 14&15 February 11&12
 March 11&12 June 10&11
 Friday 6:30pm - 9:30pm Saturday 8:30am - 3:30pm

WELCOME

VORP would like to welcome a new member to the staff, Adriana Mendoza. Adriana is originally from Madera, California. She is a freshman at Fresno Pacific University, and is dual majoring in political science and social science, with an emphasis in pre-law. She aspires to go on to law school and become an attorney. Her hobbies include singing in Fresno Pacific's women's choir and playing the violin. She plans to join the orchestra next year. Adriana will be working with Megan as a mediation manager.

Fundraising

PLEASE CALL VORP AT 455-9803 IF:

- You have a project at home that you could use a little help with: housekeeping, cleaning out the garage, yard work, washing the car, taking down outside Christmas lights, or anything else you can think of.
- You would like to have VORP kids pick up your recyclables on a regular basis
- You would like to buy discount coupon books, cookbooks or Gottshalks coupons.
- You have fundraising experience and would be willing to share any ideas with us
- You have time to volunteer helping coordinate projects and supervising kids while they work

VORP Staff

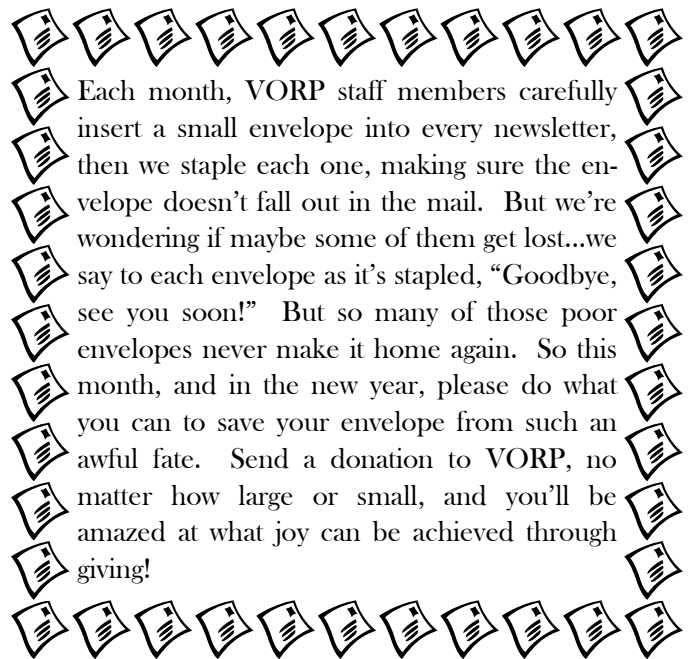
Duane Ruth-Heffelbower	Administrator
Johnny Phouthachack	Agreement Manager
Fred Risard	Mediation Manager
Megan Thompson	Mediation Manager
Adriana Mendoza	Mediation Manager
Barry Guenther	Finance Manager



CALLING ALL MEDIATORS:

VORP needs your help!

The dam at the Probation Department has broken, and VORP has received a flood of cases that need mediators! Please call VORP at 455-9803, or email vorp@fresno.edu if you'd like to take a case. It doesn't matter if you haven't mediated in a while, we'll make sure you know what you're doing.



Each month, VORP staff members carefully insert a small envelope into every newsletter, then we staple each one, making sure the envelope doesn't fall out in the mail. But we're wondering if maybe some of them get lost...we say to each envelope as it's stapled, "Goodbye, see you soon!" But so many of those poor envelopes never make it home again. So this month, and in the new year, please do what you can to save your envelope from such an awful fate. Send a donation to VORP, no matter how large or small, and you'll be amazed at what joy can be achieved through giving!

VORP Board Members

Michael Blue, Chair	Arthur Wint
Dave Purvis, Secretary/Treasurer	José Chaparro
Eleanor Richards	Faith Young

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