



Volume 23, Issue 5 September 2005

### *From the Administrator*

VORP is a dynamic organization, one that is constantly changing. The latest change for us is a staff transition as we say goodbye to Megan Thompson, a Mennonite Voluntary Service volunteer from Pennsylvania who has been with us the past two years. Those of you who have interacted with Megan know what a good representative of VORP she has been, and that we will miss her. Our new MVS volunteer, Jenna Preheim arrived in August. We will let her introduce herself on page 2. Interns from Fresno State and FPU are helping to fill the gap.

You may have seen the Fresno Bee article and editorials, or heard the radio reports of a juvenile being referred to VORP. While we don't usually find out about our cases in the newspaper, it is gratifying to see the support VORP has in the community. Those of you who read this newsletter form our most important core of support. Thank you for your continued participation with us.

**Victim Offender Reconciliation Program  
of the Central Valley, Inc.**  
4882 E. Townsend Ave., Fresno, CA 93727  
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### *Success Story*

#### A Fire Case

Something about a fire brings people together. Is it the excitement, the power, the destruction, the heat or the light? Is it the need to control it, to help those affected by it or to save what is in front of it from burning? An intentional fire recently brought community members together to make things as right as possible. VORP was asked by the juvenile court to intervene with mediation between two juveniles who set a grass fire along the river and the victim. The mediator's challenge was to find the victim. The fire was on public land in a small incorporated city and no specific victim was named in the police report.

Fortunately, or by design, the mediator was from the neighborhood and knew the volunteer firefighters who responded to the fire. They agreed to participate in the process. One of the firefighters is in charge of public relations and the cadet program for the department. The other is a school security officer where the offenders might be allowed to attend if they are not incarcerated. The firemen knew from statistics that arsonists usually repeat the offence. A police sergeant and the city manager also agreed to participate. This surrogate victim team had an interest in their city. They accepted the offenders as part of their city and were willing to participate in an opportunity to make their community whole.

The offenders were young and facing felony charges that could affect their entire lives. Their offence could exclude them from the privilege to vote or to be selected for certain employments or government services. Student loans might not be offered. These youth accepted the opportunity to participate in the VORP process. They accepted the mistake they made and agreed to try to make things as right as possible with the community. The volunteer mediator entered into dialogue with each of them giving an ear first to the telling of their stories. The story telling gave them practice and helped develop clarity and sincerity. This empowered them when they had the opportunity to share their stories with the victims during mediation. The dialogue helped create self-determination as they discovered more about who they were and the future intentions for which they could become accountable.

**ATTENTION ALL MEDIATORS!**  
We will be hosting a CJC training course to prepare mediators in handling Community Justice Conference Cases.  
If you are interested in becoming a CJC mediator or need a refresher please call the VORP office for more details. (559) 455-9803

The Center for Peacemaking and  
Conflict Studies

Fresno Pacific University

### **11<sup>th</sup> Annual Restorative Justice Conference:**

**“The Changing Criminal Justice  
System: transforming practice through  
restorative justice legislation.”**

**Sept. 23-24, 2005**

**Fresno Pacific University**

Call (559) 453 3418 for information or see  
[peace.fresno.edu/RJP](http://peace.fresno.edu/RJP) for details  
and registration information!

Continued on page 2

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**Volunteer Mediator Training**  
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**October 14-15, 2005**

Friday 6:30pm - 9:30pm

Saturday 8:30am - 3:30pm

Call 455-9803 to reserve a spot.  
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Continued on page 2

The mediation allowed all to be heard and an agreement was developed. The victims created opportunities for the offenders to make things right. The offenders agreed to visit a hospital burn unit and a forest fire site within sixty days. They agreed to write essays about these experiences and give it to the fire fighters and police sergeant. They agreed to participate with the city fire cadets during red ribbon week by presenting their research essays in the local schools. In addition, they agreed to volunteer time helping the city manager organize activities funded by a recently received grant to the city to revitalize community recreation. All the participants were happy with the agreement. VORP will monitor the agreement fulfillment and report progress to juvenile probation.

A wonderful result occurred because a community came together in a constructive forum. Young citizens were given a chance to make things right along their lives' journey, hopefully leaving behind the desire to re-offend.

-By Donald Fischer

### Yard work

If you need something done around the house or have any suggestions for ways these kids can earn money to pay restitution and get experience working, give us a call. We would love suggestions!

#### VORP Staff

Duane Ruth-Heffelbower	Administrator
Johnny Phouthachack	Agreement Manager
Jenna Preheim	Mediation Manager
Stephanie Rodriguez	Intern
Tamara Lane	Intern
Joe Montanez	Intern
Barry Guenther	Finance Manager

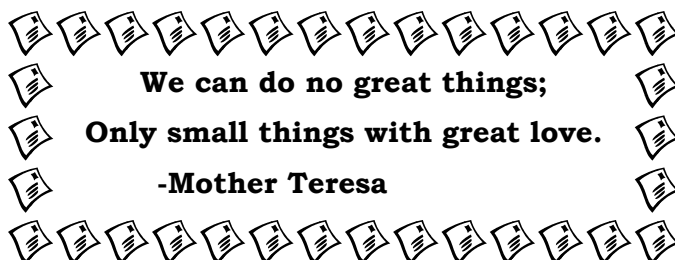
## New Mediation Manager!!!

Hello new friends! I am the new mediation manager here at VORP. My name is Jenna Preheim and I come from the little town of Monument, Colorado. I just graduated from Hesston College a small two year school in Hesston, Kansas. I am taking a year off of school to be a part of Mennonite Voluntary Service, an organization that allows people of all ages to serve all over the United States. I am excited for this year and have felt VERY welcomed by all of you that I have met. Call me to get a case. Thank you!

Restorative Justice Conference continued from page 1

Speakers from across the country and around the world will present their experience with restorative justice and its effects on those who commit crimes, victims, and the cost it has saved where implemented; Fred McElrea, District Court Judge, Auckland, New Zealand; Attorney Dan Van Ness, Executive Director of the Prison Fellowship International Center for Justice and Reconciliation, and Sue Solis, survivor restoration advocate, who has appeared on Oprah and Larry King Live.

Discussion panelists will include officials from Fresno City and County courts, law enforcement, business and non-profit communities.



#### VORP Board Members

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

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