



Volume 23, Issue 7 November 2005

From the Administrator

Happy Thanksgiving! "Be careful what you ask for, you might get it." That old saying means more to us these days. In 2004 we had the smallest number cases in our history, 120. A lot of effort went into changing that, and this year we are on track to receive 400. Beginning in January we expect to be receiving another 50 cases a week, a dramatic increase. These new cases are the result of an agreement with Juvenile Probation to take all graffiti, petty theft, vandalism and simple assault cases where the District Attorney is not bringing charges in court. Probation has been handling those cases and VORP will be given responsibility for them.

We could not do such a large volume of cases in our traditional way, and so are developing ways to handle groups of cases together.

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ATTENTION ALL MEDIATORS!

Advanced training for experienced mediators: VORP is blessed with mediators who have a lot of experience. It is time to both upgrade your skills and acknowledge your expertise. On January 19, 2005 we will offer an advanced training for those who have done at least ten cases. This will both draw on the expertise of the participants and offer specific training in the more nuanced skills taught in the FPU masters degree program. Those who complete this training will receive VORP's "Master Mediator" certificate, and will be assigned our most complex or sensitive cases. Those who are close to the ten case mark are invited to call the office for new cases. We have them ready for you.

Volunteer Mediator Training
January 13-14, 2006
February 10-11, 2006

Friday 6:30pm - 9:30pm
Saturday 8:30am - 3:30pm
Call 455-9803 to reserve a spot.

**Victim Offender Reconciliation Program
of the Central Valley, Inc.**
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The Transforming Power of VORP

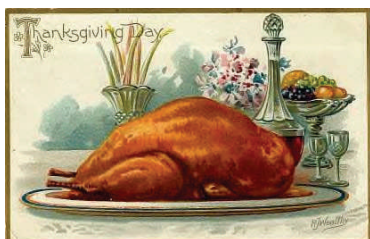
By Ron Claassen

We, Roxanne (my wife and co-mediator) and I, recently worked on a case that reminded me again why I think VORP is so important. (Names and just enough details have been changed to protect identities.)

It was a residential burglary case and the victim chose to have the joint meeting at her house (this is quite common for residential burglary). The victim, Lisa, invited her son 21 year old son, Chad, to join her in the meeting and the offender George, invited his mother Angie, his sister and a family friend. After the intense process describing experiences and summarizing, especially when the offender summarized the victim's experience, the mothers talked to each other about their concerns for their children and hopes for them. We then talked about what was taken and restitution. Lisa indicated that her primary concern was that George find better friends and not get involved in something like this again. George's family needed some alone time to discuss how best George could cover the losses. In the mean time, Roxanne and I, along with Lisa and Chad left the living room and went outside in the front yard to wait. Later we thought about the situation and realized that what had happened was the "burglar" and his family were left alone in the home he had burglarized, and that Roxanne's purse was sitting there in the living room. Interestingly, none of us was in any way concerned that they would do something inappropriate. When the family was ready, about 10 minutes later, we rejoined them in the living room. George gave us his proposal: give them his play-station (similar to the one taken but better) and pay the balance in \$30 weekly installments. Chad asked for details on the play station and valued it at \$250 but George said it should only be valued at \$110. Lisa and Chad indicated that that was more than satisfactory. As part of writing the agreement, I told them we would like to have a follow-up meeting to recognize if the agreements had been kept, and if so, to celebrate the completion. George's mother asked if the follow-up meeting could be held at her house. Lisa and Chad agreed.

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The group method has been successful elsewhere in shoplifting, graffiti and vandalism cases. We will draw on the experience of other programs as we develop our own. This will still leave a much larger number of cases which need to be handled in VORP's traditional way using volunteer mediators. If you have not taken a case for a while, please take one now. The holiday season is a busy time for all of us, but it is also the time for giving. The gift of your time to victims and offenders will brighten the season for everyone. We also hope you will remember VORP's financial needs at this time of year. Without our staff, mediators would have no office support. We are glad you share in this ministry.



VORP Staff

Duane Ruth-Heffelbower	Administrator
Johnny Phouthachack	Agreement Manager
Jenna Preheim	Mediation Manager
Tamara Lane	Intern
Joe Montanez	Intern
Kindra Snow	Intern
Hans Gutierrez	Student Worker
Barry Guenther	Finance Manager

(Transforming Power Continued from Pg. 1)

Several weeks later when the agreement was completed, we all met at George's house where they had prepared a wonderful meal and had also made a birthday cake for Lisa's youngest son. Everyone had a very enjoyable time and it was wonderful to celebrate that George had kept the agreement and was making some new friends. Trust was growing. Justice, making things right, had been experienced by all parties. Lisa said she is feeling safer and is glad that she no longer has to fear or dread meeting George or his family members. George said that he will not repeat a similar offense. George's mother feels much better now that George has accepted responsibility and made things right, something she felt he needed to do. All were thankful for VORP.

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 * "mediator folder" will be online for your *
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