

# VORP

## News

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**Victim Offender Reconciliation Program  
of the Central Valley, Inc.**  
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### From the Administrator

#### What it means to be a VORP Master Mediator

We recently gathered a group of very experienced and successful VORP mediators to define a new category of mediator, the VORP Master Mediator. These people are heroes who have helped change the lives of those they have worked with through VORP. We divided our attempt to explain what a Master Mediator is into three categories: experience, skill sets and way of being. Here is what we identified:

#### Experience

- Certain number and variety of cases, quantifiable but a fixed number not yet determined. Less than one percent of our mediators typically reach this level.
- Good ratio of agreements in joint meetings, approaching 100%.
- Has some refusals to mediate as proof against coercion
- Leads people to agreements that are successfully completed by the offender.
- Agreements made with structure, detail, strategy, and process.
- Mentors less experienced mediators.
- Community, support and connectedness with other mediators.

#### Skill Sets

- Instills confidence in the parties/ rapport
- Can clearly articulate benefits of the process to both victim and offender
- Can clearly articulate potential harm from not participating in process without sliding into coercion (knowledge of alternatives and of criminal justice system)
- Can clearly articulate mediator's role and process.
- Communicates acceptance of the parties, non-judgmental attitude
- Effective body language and tone of voice
- Active listener/ open to learn from others about their experiences.
- Knows the script, communicates that they know what to do next

(Continued from previous column)

- Ability and desire to empower others to make decisions.
- Is able to recognize the readiness of the parties to agree (recognizes the tipping point in mediation)
- Creates a safe setting, maintains the trust of the parties, and stays in charge of the process.
- Mediator has unconditional commitment to be constructive as well as the ability to draw that same constructiveness out of the parties, and to call it back again and again.
- Is a non-anxious presence
- Brings hope
- Has cross-cultural competence
- Has respect for all people
- Expects the "rush" that comes from a successful joint meeting
- Has good self-care
- Has patience and perseverance
- Has tenacity
- Has humility/meekness
- Has good intuition

#### Way of Being

- Has self-acceptance/ inner peace/ Holy Spirit, however the individual defines it
- Centered.
- Sense of call and of being sent
- Believes that the process will work and will help the parties
- Sees mediation as a way of life
- Character

This list of qualities sounds impossible, but our Master Mediators tend to embody all these things, or see those they don't yet embody as a goal. As we train and mentor mediators we are trying to help them move in this direction. If you would like to be this kind of person, come and work with us.

Duane Ruth-Heffelbower



### Volunteer Mediator Training

**March 17-18, 2006**

Friday 6:30pm - 9:30pm

Saturday 8:30am - 3:30pm

*Call 455-9803 to reserve a spot.*

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\* PLEASE CALL VORP AT 455-9803 IF: You \*  
\* have time to volunteer helping coordinate projects \*  
\* and supervising kids while they work. Or 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 etc. \*  
\*\*\*\*\*

### **Case Success Story**

By Victoria Walters

The paperwork which was faxed to me gave the names and contact information of two juvenile offenders who had been referred to VORP. Over a period of several evenings benches and bleachers were stolen from a middle school. By the time we met with the one willing offender, he had already spent several days in juvenile hall where his attorney had encouraged him to “just plead guilty” and do a clean probation so that this would “all go away” without having to “go through the court system.” He’d taken the attorney’s advice and was doing community service as part of his probationary sanction, but his mother had been presented with an estimate of the damage of nearly \$10,000. Our first meeting with the representative from Risk Management of the middle school was anything but encouraging. Next came the face-to-face meeting. Present were the offender, his mother, the Risk Management representative and the representative’s immediate supervisor. After the ground rules were laid out, the meeting began with the offender telling his story. When it was the Risk Management representative’s turn to tell how the offense had affected the school, she was prepared with a list of costs. Her boss provided a “bigger picture” rendition of how much crime actually costs in the school system. He also expressed how this individual offense was only part of the equation that in reality costs the students being educated because funds must be re-directed from purchasing needed supplies.

At that point the juvenile chimed in with, “books, better equipment....”

The risk management said, “exactly.”

(Continued from the previous column)

The young man had truly gotten the picture and his understanding turned the tone of the whole meeting. From that point, the risk management representative started re-evaluating the situation and the numbers. What had been an estimate of \$10,000 loss was reduced by the value of the benches and bleachers that have been recovered and the “actual cost” was reassessed to be the price of the two benches that did have to be replaced. The new loss-amount was \$422. The representative didn’t feel that it was totally fair to expect the one juvenile to assume liability for what others were party to, so they cut the final figure accordingly. They would be open to either cash payment or the juvenile could work it off. Relief was written all over the juvenile’s mother’s face. The mom turned to her son and asked him, “If we go halves on this, are you willing to work off your half?”

He said, “Mom, you shouldn’t have to pay anything...I’ll work all of it off.”

At that point, everyone in the room was proud of him and said so. As his commitment to the future, he agreed that he would be more selective in who he hangs around with and would recognize that when his mom warns him about certain “friends” it isn’t because she’s being mean, but because she sees something that he doesn’t. He also agreed to pay closer attention to what’s going on around him and if it doesn’t “feel right” to him he will abandon the area. We drew up a written agreement that was signed by everyone in the room, and ended the meeting by thanking all parties for being constructive. All parties left satisfied that justice had been served.

### **VORP Staff**

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

### **VORP Board Members**

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

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