



Volume 24, Issue 5, May 2006

Victim Offender Reconciliation Program of the Central Valley, Inc.

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From The Administrator

In-service for VORP mediators

This past weekend I was in Archbold, Ohio resourcing mediators and staff in the Victim Offender program of Shalom Ministries. It is always interesting to create good ways to provide ongoing education for mediators and staff. Here in Fresno we have had periodic events, but not a regular plan. Life is busy, and it is difficult for most of our mediators to both mediate cases and come to meetings. That being said, ongoing skill development requires reflection on experience. Experience that is not shared and processed with other knowledgeable people is much less valuable, since it can lead to development of bad habits. For me, one of the good things about being part of the Center for Peacemaking and Conflict Studies is that our faculty and staff have constant interaction where we discuss cases and strategy, and get a chance to observe each other at work. The mediation classes offered by CPACS through Fresno Pacific University offer the same kind of feedback to our students. VORP will be working on ways to provide that opportunity to our mediators in a more regular way. In the meantime, our mediators can feel free to attend our regular trainings to share experiences and be reminded of the principles on which the program is based. That can be particularly helpful if you haven't taken a case for a while. Let us know what you think about the idea of regular resourcing.

To access mediator forms go to:
<http://vorp.org/forms>

Volunteer Mediator Training

May 19-20, 2006

September 15-16, 2006

October 6-7, 2006

November 10-11, 2006

Friday 6:30pm - 9:30pm

Saturday 8:30am - 3:30pm

Call 455-9803 to reserve a spot.

Mediation: One Process, Many Uses By Noelle Daoudian

The VORP process for mediation can cross into other venues of mediation and remain effective. The civil court system is one such place. Currently the courts are backed up and cases can be scheduled for trial up to 3-4 years after the offense has occurred. Mediation can provide a speedy and legally binding agreement to the parties involved. Through the agreement, the case is dismissed and then read on to the record at the courthouse.

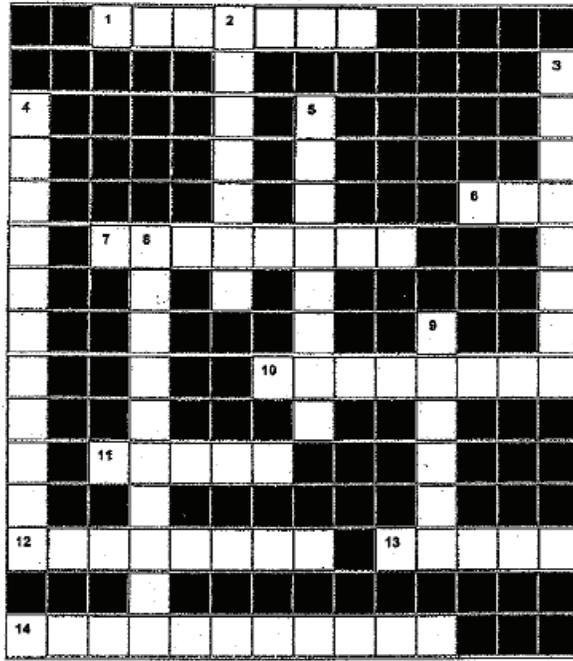
Working for the Superior Court of Fresno to do Civil Court Mediation has proved to be challenging in a different way than the VORP program. This is mainly because there is not always a clear "victim" and "offender." However, the process remains quite similar. The basic process of bringing the parties together to discuss how they experienced the conflict and then coming to an amicable solution to the conflict/offense remains similar. However, getting to that point differs because of the way our program is set up.

The program with the civil court of Fresno is funded by the Dispute Resolution Program Act (DRPA) which is drawn from an additional fee when a lawsuit is filed. The cases are referred to our office by the Superior Court. Most cases have one party which represents himself/herself and the court fee has also been waived. Thus, many people who come through the program are unfamiliar with the legal system and need some assistance. Most of the parties involved are not aware of the mediation process. Though, when they learn of the relational benefits as well as the cost effectiveness of mediation, they are almost always willing to participate in the process. Like VORP, the process is purely voluntary and can be rejected by either party at any point. Although, once the parties have initially agreed to participate, there is a ninety percent agreement rate in our program.

In the mediations of which I have been a part, both with the court and VORP, there is always a point where I think that it will not work. The main problem that surfaces is that either one or both parties seem to be unwilling to change their position and neither will think outside the box for the solution. At some point towards the end of the mediation session, one person realizes that this agreement that they can be a part of is a far better option than going through the rest of the legal process which will only incur more cost and loss of time. Usually after one of the parties realizes this, and is willing to work with the other party, the example is set and the other party usually follows suit. At the beginning of almost every mediation, one senses a tension and at times animosity in the room. By the end of the mediation, the parties are congratulating each other and sometimes even laughing and physically embracing each other. It is amazing to experience the complete reversal from beginning to end. Being able to see the change from being suspicious to trusting and optimistic of the future is truly remarkable and has to be experienced in order to understand the power of the mediation process.

Noelle Daoudian is a student in the Peacemaking and Conflict Studies Masters Program and currently works as a Civil Court Mediator, as well as a VORP volunteer mediator. She also enjoys long walks on beach.

VORP Challenge Crossword



Across:

- 1 This is Johnny's _____ year as Agreement Manager
- 6 VORP has _____ official employee(s)
- 7 At the beginning of 2006, there was a dramatic _____ of cases.
- 10 VORP offers 8 _____ trainings a year.
- 11 When agreements are made and kept, _____ grows.
- 12 Former VORP director.
- 13 One reason for bringing the victim and offender together is to make things as _____ as possible.
- 14 A current goal is to put _____ justice into legislation in Fresno County.

Down:

- 2 Town of first VORP in United States.
- 3 The party the mediator always meets with first.
- 4 VORP is next door to the Center for _____.
- 5 Founder of Fresno VORP.
- 8 VORP is a _____ organization.
- 9 Author of quote in last month's newsletter.

Be one of the first three to call in with all the correct answers to the VORP Crossword Puzzle and win a prize!!!

 * 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. *
 * *****

VORP Staff

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