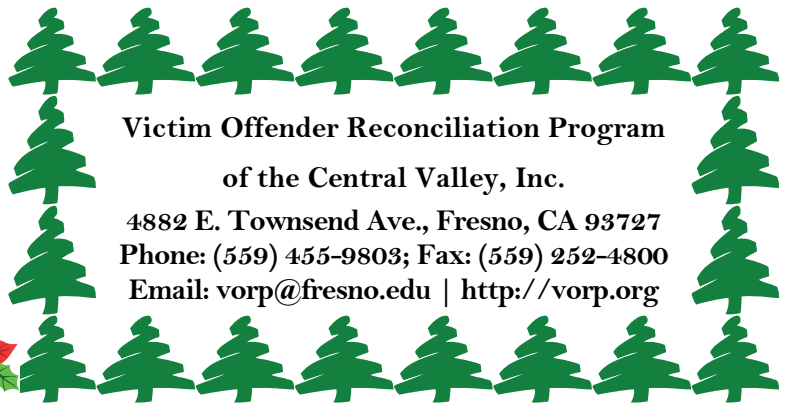


VORP News

Volume 24, Issue 12, December 2006



Victim Offender Reconciliation Program
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A Mediation Story

-Tim & Lou Ann Moore

This case involved 3 minors aged 12 to 13 years old. They keyed five cars in the parking lot at an elementary school in Fresno. The minors were caught and taken to the Vice Principal of the school. It turns out the Vice Principal's car was one of the most severely damaged cars.

At the Victim and Offender's meeting the offender appeared to be very sorry for the damage he had done. He said he didn't know who the car belonged to and he was just hanging out with the other boys. He said he would not have done this by himself but he wanted to fit in with the other boys. He gave the victim a thoughtful and sincere letter of apology.

In his letter of apology he talked about how he thought the victim must have felt discovering the damage to her car and how he would feel to discover that one of his possessions was damaged by someone else. He closed his letter by saying he has given serious thought to how she must feel and hopes she will see him as a friend not an enemy.

The juvenile court had imposed a sentence of 75 hours of community service (50 hours if completed at the elementary school where the crime was committed). At the conclusion of the meeting the Vice Principal called the Night Maintenance Supervisor in and introduced him to the offender. I was impressed with the offender's attitude toward his community service work and willingness to do whatever tasks the Night Maintenance Supervisor might assign.

The victim agreed to forgive the cost of damages to the car and had written a very favorable letter to the probation department on the Offender's behalf. The court accepted this agreement. *Because of this positive experience, the victim, offender, and offender's parent left the meeting showing care, concern and respect for each other.*

After the meeting I think he has a better understanding of the difference between friends and acquaintances. He seemed to be truly repentant.

I believe the victim's attitude toward the offender and her willingness to support the offender as he does his community service is very commendable. Her support of the offender and his family at this time is going to have a major impact on this young man.

Tim and Lou Ann Moore are our faithful VORP coordinators for People's Church and have worked diligently to promote the program in their congregation.

Administrator's Corner

2006 has been a good year for VORP. Our case numbers are way up, new church-based VORPs are being formed, and we are over half way to making our \$100,000 match. We learned that the large flow of citation cases meant a large number of cases that did not go forward. Figuring out how to manage that flow has been a challenge, but we are getting a handle on it. We want to make sure that volunteers get cases that will go forward, so have developed new screening techniques to avoid the frustration of non-working phone numbers and incorrect addresses. This extra staff work had not been possible with a part-time mediation manager, so we were very glad to have Noelle Daoudian join us full time in that role. Having two full-time salaried staff people is a first for VORP, and has only been possible through the matching grant. As you think about your year-end giving please remember us. We still have a long way to go in matching the whole grant. Blessings to you and yours this Christmas season.

Born to Reconcile

-Holly Mattos

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation."

2 Corinthians 5:17-19

This is the message of hope that Christ brings to us—things can be made right!

There is hope for broken relationships, shattered dreams, and damaged spirits.

God loves us so much that He provided a way for us to be reconciled to Him; and not only that, but also that we can be reconciled to each other. This is the hope and beauty of the Gospel of Jesus Christ: that what was once broken can be repaired.

God's great gift to all people was made flesh in Jesus His son. By sending Him to earth to be born, to live and minister among ordinary people, to die on the cross, and to be raised to life again, God made a way for us to know Him. In Jesus, we have a means to know God and be in relationship with Him. Jesus knows what it is to walk on earth with all of the frustrations and pain and despair that exist here. But He also knows that there are ways to change this world and bring hope and life and love. As His followers, we can experience the power of the Gospel lived out in everyday ways.

Everyday we experience some sort of conflict, discomfort, or brokenness in our relationships with others. But in Christ there is hope for restoration and healing of these rifts. By the comfort of His spirit, God provides for us and can make a way through something that seems impossible. Sometimes this is done through confronting others with what they have done to hurt us and finding ways to heal that hurt. Other times it is the work of the Spirit to work on our hearts and lead us to repentance for what we have done to harm others.

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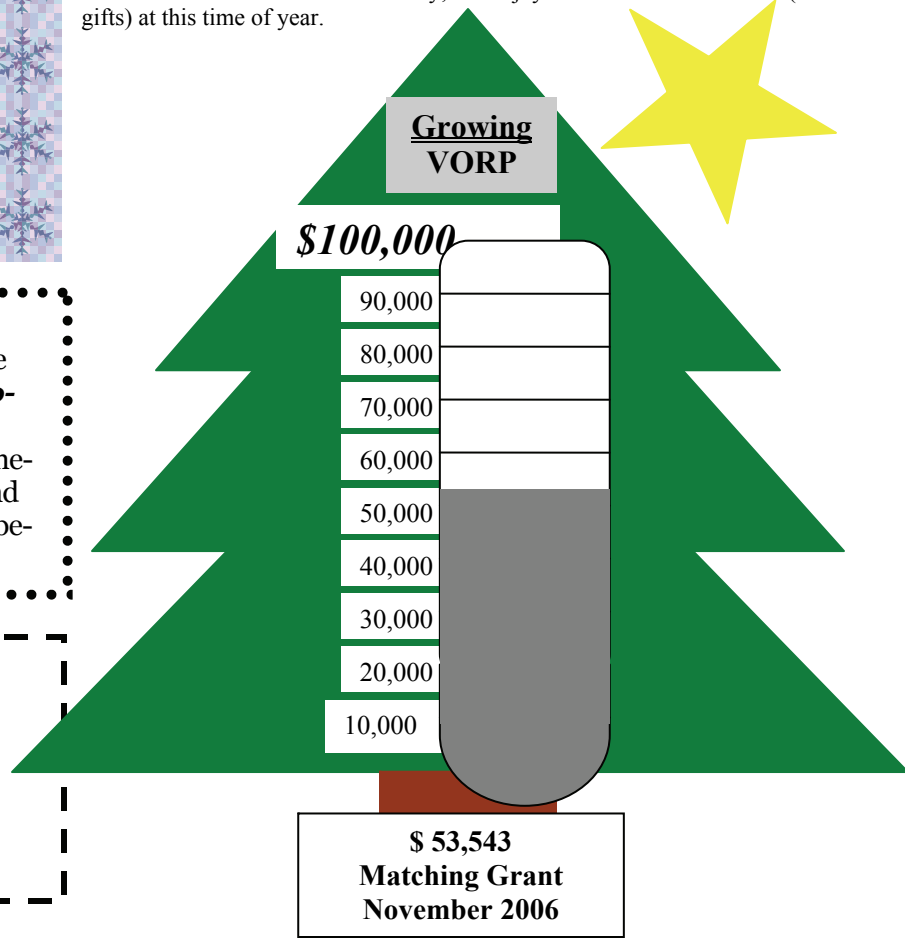
Reconciled Continued...

In this continual process of being reconciled to God through Jesus' life and death, we also learn how to be reconciled to others. In dying to ourselves, we find new life as we learn to relate with all honesty, love, and grace. This ministry of reconciliation is one of soul work and introspection, hard conversations and real connections. It is not for the faint of heart as it requires commitment, humility, and often a sense of humor. But the work to make things right is the most rewarding of all as it allows for growth and a deepening of relationships.

Christ's birth was the beginning of this process of reconciliation on a grand scale.

In this season of celebrating God's greatest gift, let us take the time to work towards reconciliation and restoration of relationships in our own circle of influence.

Holly Mattos is the Administrator Director at the Center for Peacemaking and is a graduate of the Leadership Masters program. Christened Holly Marie in honor of her December 23rd birthday, she enjoys double the celebrations (and gifts) at this time of year.



**Intern
Juan Angel Villon**

I was born in Brawley, Ca. After high school I graduated from Imperial Valley College while working at Centinela State Prison. I moved to Fresno in 2003 to attend Fresno State and began working at Central California Women's Facility in Chowchilla in 2004.

I am a Criminology major with an option in Law Enforcement. I am also a Philosophy major with a pre-law option and a Psychology minor as well. I am looking to do any internship next semester with a law firm.

This is my last month at VORP. I have enjoyed working here and have learned a lot about how to mediate cases and the importance of victim participation in the process.

A VORP New Year's Resolution for You!

If you have ever taken our mediation training course you are qualified to TAKE A CASE!!! **Thus we propose that you commit to yourself to take 3 cases in 2007.** We always have cases ready for a mediator, so please do not hesitate to call or come in and get one. We always really appreciate our mediators because without you our program could not exist.

Volunteer Mediator Training

January 12-13, 2007

Friday 6:30pm - 9:30pm

Saturday 8:30am - 3:30pm

Call 455-9803 to reserve a spot.

VORP Staff

Duane Ruth-Heffelbower	Administrator
Johnny Phouthachack	Agreement Manager
Noelle Daoudian	Mediation Manager
Barry Guenther	Finance Manager

VORP Board Members

Michael Blue, Chair	Arthur Wint
Dave Purvis, Secretary/Treasurer	José Chaparro
Ron Blalack	

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