

# VORP News



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

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### Transitions at VORP

Ron Claassen founded VORP with the help of his wife, Roxanne. He then continued as Executive Director for seventeen years, stepping down in 1999. Jay Griffith was the Executive Director from 1999-2002. In September 2002 the Center for Peacemaking and Conflict Studies of Fresno Pacific University was given the responsibility for administering VORP. Ron Claassen, Director of the Center, worked at long Range issues and Duane Ruth-Heffelbower became the administrator in charge of day to day operations. The administrative arrangement with the Center for Peacemaking continues as responsibilities are changed.

On September 27 Noelle Daoudian, VORP's Mediation Manager, became the Program Director of VORP. Johnny Phouthachak continues as Agreements Manager. Ron Claassen, as Director of the Center for Peacemaking and Conflict Studies, will continue to provide support to Noelle and Duane Ruth-Heffelbower, who chaired the Board at the time of VORP's incorporation in 1985, will continue as a consultant.

We are excited to begin this new chapter. Give Noelle a call to congratulate her, and then offer to take a case.  
~Duane Ruth-Heffelbower

**\*Watch out next month for: "Get to Know Noelle"**



### Cultural Competence Workshop Follow-Up

I would like to thank all the mediators who attended my cultural competence workshop on September the 29! The workshop consisted of five mediators, seven helping professionals, and two hopeful college students. The participants walked away well informed about African Americans, Latin Americans, Hmong Americans, and Mexican Americans. I am sure that they are now better equipped to work within the cultural values of their client which is the goal of this workshop. This workshop is catered so attendees walked away with a full stomach as well.

For those of you who were not able to attend VORPS' first cultural competence workshop, you will be given another opportunity on **November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 9AM-2PM at Fresno Pacific in Sattler 101.** I hope to see all of you! **Please RSVP Joe Montanez at 455-9803 Cost: 20\$**

### Kingdom Work

Jon Isaak

During the summer of 2006 I took a weekend refresher course for volunteer mediators taught by long-time mediator Tony Redfern. The sessions were held at the College Community Church, Mennonite Brethren—the church where I am a member. We were experimenting with the idea of becoming a church-based VORP site and I was interested in upgrading my mediation skills. Years ago when I was a seminary student, I had taken the VORP course and mediated a case. Already at that time I had been impressed by the program and its potential for dealing with conflict and for helping people develop healthy ways of communicating.

After the mediator training last summer, I agreed to take a case. Unfortunately, after working with both parties extensively, I was unable to bring them to the negotiating table. There was a high degree of mistrust and I could not persuade the parties to meet face-to-face. The case went back to the probation officer. Following this disappointing experience, I discussed the case with more experienced mediators at the VORP office and realized that there were a few things that I could have done differently. I resolved to try again the following year.

In July 2007 I called the VORP office asking if there was a case for me to mediate. I wanted to try again. The case I was given involved a family dispute together with theft and vandalism. As I met with both parties, I was saddened by the stories of pain, rejection, intimidation, and loss. However, this time I was able to get both parties to come together. We met in the Fellowship Hall at College Community Church. There were tears and hard things said, but the meeting went very well. In the face-to-face meeting between the victim and the offender something very special happened! Both parties were able to hear each other speak about the event and its impact on others. Apologies were given, community service hours were assigned, counseling was scheduled, and promises were made to address some of the family system needs and to make things better. I drove home from the meeting very encouraged! For me this was a profound demonstration of God's kingdom work in the lives of real families. \*

Jon Isaak teaches Bible at M.B. Biblical Seminary in Fresno. He and his wife have two high-school children. When not teaching or writing, Jon enjoys rebuilding old air-cooled VW Beetles.

\* Note from Duane Ruth-Heffelbower: Half of the cases referred to us do not result in a joint meeting. Among those who do meet, there is a 99% chance of reaching agreement.

I would like to donate to VORP:  \$50  \$100  \$200  Other \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Change of Address : \_\_\_\_\_

Change of Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

## New Faces at VORP

### **Whitney Bloodworth**

My name is Whitney Bloodworth and I am a senior at CSU Fresno. I grew up in the small town Madera Ranchos which is about 15 miles north of Fresno. I am currently studying Criminology with a focus on Victimology at Fresno State and graduating in May of 2008. I plan to pursue a career in victim services and assist victims of crime in any way possible. I strongly believe that Restorative Justice is an essential element in helping victim's deal with the pain of their victimization. It is important that they understand that it is not their fault and meeting with their offender gives them the opportunity to ask any questions they may have. The mediation process that the VORP program provides allows the victim and offender to get the closure they need to begin the healing process and that is why I chose to work with the VORP program.

### **Trent Scarbery**

My name is Trent Scarbery and I am a senior at Fresno State. I am a criminology major with an emphasis on victimology. I graduated from Reedley High School in 2004 and I plan on graduating from Fresno State in May of 2008. I first heard about VORP at my church, First Mennonite Church in Reedley. The VORP program has also been discussed in many of my classes at Fresno State. Restorative justice programs, like VORP, help all the individuals involved with the crime better understand one another.

I am still not sure of a career choice, however, I am very interested in social work and victim advocacy. Both of the fields of work interest me greatly. I look forward to helping individuals while doing this internship over the next few months, as well as in the future.

## Case Update as of September 2007

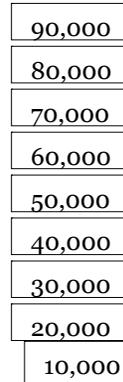
Our caseload total of 480 cases is a little lower than last year, but this is mostly due to a decrease in box cited cases with only 272 cases referred. However, our standard cases with a probation officer have held strong with 208 cases referred. We have a total of 93 agreements for the year, which is on target and we are expecting a couple more soon!

We have 198 cases currently in process, most have a mediator, but we always have cases that are ready to be picked up by our mediators. So if you would like to take a case call our office and we'll get one to you.



### **Growing VORP**

**\$100,000**



**\$ 95,025.00**

**Matching Grant  
September 2007**

### **VORP Staff**

Noelle Daoudian	Director
Johnny Phouthachack	Agreement Manager
Duane Ruth-Heffelbower	Consultant

### **VORP Board Members**

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



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