



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

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**DONALD FISCHER 40TH ANNUAL VOLUNTEER AWARD RECIPIENT**

Volunteer Mediator Donald Fischer was honored as a finalist at the 40<sup>th</sup> Annual Volunteer of the Year Awards for his volunteer work at VORP. The awards luncheon was held at the International Trade Center on April 30, 2008.

Donald Fischer has been a VORP volunteer mediator since 2003 and has worked on over 50 cases. He has also played an instrumental role in developing our mediation process and program with the City of Fresno. He is very involved in the mediation and alternative dispute resolution community and yet still finds time to volunteer and offer new ideas on ways we can improve our program. Donald always is willing to take on challenging case when we need an experienced mediator. Thank you Don for all you do, we could not exist without people like you!

• VORP Director Noelle Daoudian (left) and VORP Agreement Manager Johnny Phouthachack (right) smile and pose with Finalist Volunteer of the Year Donald Fischer (middle)



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**Restorative Justice Community Forum  
 June 3rd, 7:00-9:00 PM  
 Johanson Room at Fresno Pacific  
 University**

The speaker will be Chris Graveson from New Zealand. Inspector Chris Graveson has been the National Coordinator of Police Youth Aid since 1995. He will present on New Zealand's Restorative Juvenile Justice System and take questions.

If you have any questions or need directions please call Jason Ekk at 455-3488.

**NOELLE DAUDIAN -DIRECTOR-**

**OFFERING HOPE**



What is the importance of an agreement? We have our tag line "Trust grows when agreements are made and kept" but do agreements provide more than trust?

Reflecting back on the cases I have worked on, I can see a trend as I believe most mediators could attest to. When I first meet with the juvenile offender, many times they feel remorse for what they have done, and will openly admit that what they did was wrong. However, what to do about it is usually the question posed. They go through the mediation process: storytelling, making things right and clarifying future intentions. It is the latter part I would like to comment on. What are your intentions for the future? Do you plan on committing this offense again,

and if not what are you going to do to prevent this from happening again? To me it is a question of hope. It is a statement that we believe that this youth is capable of making the right choices and that we will choose to believe him/her if they say they will not do this again. It is an opportunity for the juvenile to take responsibility for his/her life and make these decisions that will be life determining or even life altering resolution.

Once the youth has accepted responsibility for their actions and are willing to make things right through an agreement, we at VORP make sure that they are successful in completing their agreement. We all strongly believe that our program offers this life changing power of making an agreement and keeping your word. We strive to make sure that every effort has been offered to help the youth make this change from making poor choices to making good

ones and keeping their word. We believe that this is a biblical model set up by God through His son Jesus Christ. We are all sinners and yet God sent His son to die for us in order that we might be reconciled to Him. Even after we accept Christ as our savior, we still sin and God still gives us every opportunity for us to get back into a right relationship with him or "be successful" and even gives us His spirit and His word to guide us. This is God's grace being extended to us just as we extend grace to all offenders referred to our program. What is common of both us and the offenders whom we work with, is the fact that we can choose to accept or reject the grace extended to us. However, the grace is continually offered if we should choose to accept.

I believe VORP is a beautiful example of God's unconditional and supportive love offered to us every day that gives us purpose and a

**I would like to make a tax-deductible donation to VORP:**

\$200  \$100  \$50  Other \_\_\_\_\_

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

Change of Address or Phone # : \_\_\_\_\_

## Jana Hendricks- Grad Student in Theology and Peace Studies at FPU

From the moment I picked it up, this case intrigued me. Here was a 12-year-old boy who was in trouble for a fight he began with a teacher at school. He was pretty young too, already in the juvenile probation system, I hoped I could do something to help. I met the offender and his mother at a local mall. His mother seemed very interested in talking with me on the phone, so I was hopeful that our meeting would go well. As it turned out, the mother was in the process of suing the school for not implementing a behavioral program for her at-risk child. This was not something that I would have to contend with, but it did add another dimension to the story. This particular incident started with a fight in the classroom between John Doe and another student. JD was sent to see the principal. As he was waiting to meet with him, another concerned teacher approached JD to asked him what was going on. JD, angry and hot-headed, swore at the teacher, tried to run away, and then punched him a few times in the stomach. Not surprisingly, this was not the story JD told his mother, who believed him to be innocent and the target

of an angry teacher. For that reason, she was incensed with the school and the teacher, saying, "We have nothing to apologize for." Sensing that an accurate account of the story was not out in the open, I pressed JD to tell the truth; much to his mother's surprise, he admitted to calling the teacher some pretty bad names and admitted his need to apologize to the teacher. His mother was still unrelenting even with the new information provided about the story, but she agreed to proceed with joint mediation nonetheless. This surprised me.

When I met with the teacher, I learned he was very concerned about JD (who no longer attended that school). He also told me he did not feel like a victim, and was not the one who called the police which had led to JD's referral to the probation department. He was happy I had called him, and confirmed my inklings that JD's recounting of the incident was not accurate. The teacher wanted no restitution other than to know how JD was doing, and therefore thought mediation was a great idea. Now JD and the teacher were on board with a joint meeting, but there was still an obstacle: JD's mother. In our individual meeting, her attitude was uncompromising, inexorable, and aggravated. I was confused why she had agreed to mediation if she didn't feel they had anything for which to apologize, but I practiced my skills in positive thinking. Scheduling the joint mediation was difficult, but JD and his mother, the teacher, and I all finally got together one afternoon after school. Much to my surprise, JD's mother's attitude had

been replaced with one of openness and friendliness. She immediately said she wanted to hear the teacher's side of the story, acknowledging that perhaps her son's story was at least somewhat erroneous. When it was time for both the victim and offender to recount their story, including both facts and feelings, JD became very embarrassed; he covered his mouth with his hands and hid his head in his arms, not wanting to make eye contact with the teacher. When it came time to make things right between victim and offender, JD had a lot of difficulty with his apology and again hid his face. It was a difficult moment, and I was not sure how to proceed. The teacher jumped in at just the right moment, and, reaching out to the boy said, "JD, I'm sorry it happened, too." It was a very touching moment. He showed his concern for the youngster, and invited him to meet for a snack sometime, just the two of them. Even though this conflict occurred, it was possible it could be overcome and even develop into a friendship. We even sat for several minutes each talking about our lives and our hopes for the future.

This case exceeded my expectations and provided a valuable lesson: do not jump to conclusions about a case as the outcome may surprise you. And that is the joy and excitement of mediation.

(I have had the pleasure of hearing Jana's thoughts throughout the five month process of this case. I would like to thank her for sharing those thoughts with others and for her diligence in this case, Morgan Crawford)

### VORP Board Members

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### WE NEED INTERPRETERS!!

If you speak any other language in addition to English, we need your help. We are building a strong database of interpreters and are in special need of Hmong, Vietnamese, Cambodian. Without interpreters, these cases become very difficult to coordinate and mediate. Thank you for your help.



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