

# New Opportunities: Restorative Justice Initiative Update

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Some of you may have heard or read about the Restorative Justice Initiative which the Center for Peacemaking and Conflict Studies (CPACS) has begun in the past two years. Through a grant from the California Endowment, CPACS will be implementing a pilot project in the juvenile justice system. This pilot project will be supported by VORP and the mediators will also come from VORP and need Advanced Mediator Training.\* The first case should come around the opening of the new Juvenile Justice Campus on July 6<sup>th</sup>. This pilot project will expand the range of cases, both in seriousness and in number, that are coming to VORP. Also instead of relying solely on referrals from probation officers, this pilot project will be getting cases from the courts. It is exciting times for VORP!

Another great new development in VORP is the "Mediation Class." To facilitate the large volume of citation cases (cases VORP receives from probation that probation would not normally be doing anything with), VORP has developed a mediation class. How it

works is that VORP invites some (usually four or five) juvenile offenders and their parents to a meeting. The facilitator explains the process of mediation and answers any questions they might have on the process. Then the facilitator and any mediator assistants conduct a parent-teen mediation with each teen and their parents.

This class serves many purposes. First, it provides an opportunity for parents and teens to participate in a mediation between themselves and work out some of the issues they might have because of the crime. Second, by having a person at VORP go through these cases it pre-screens the cases that have bad information or wrong contact information (which can be a problem with these cases). Lastly, it better prepares the offender and their family for the mediation with the victim if they choose to participate.

Last week I had the opportunity to be a part of one of these meeting and conduct two parent-teen mediations. It was a great experience. The first one really stood out. "John", the teenager, was caught

tagging a building. Through the mediation both parents were able to vent their frustrations while still assuring him that they wanted what was best for him. John was remorseful and willing to try to make things as right as possible with his parents. They agreed that he would write a letter of apology to the victim and the parents were going to get to know his friends better.

Doing mediations reminds me of why I am doing what I am doing with the pilot project. It can become very impersonal talking about eligibility criteria, agreement forms, timelines, office supplies, case management systems, and various other details that need to be worked out in order for this pilot project to get off the ground. But, doing a mediation like this one with Manuel and his family, even though it was a small one, reminds me that mediation does work. Restorative justice works and makes a difference in a person and family's life.

Jason Ekk is a board member of VORP and a volunteer mediator. He is the program director of the Restorative Justice Initiative at the Center for Peacemaking and Conflict Studies (CPACS).

### \*Advanced Mediator Training

If you are a current or previous VORP mediator you may be interested in completing advanced mediator training in order to become part of the pilot project with the Restorative Justice Initiative. If so please contact our office 455-9803 as we will begin training soon.



## Trainings and Materials

### Cultural Competence Workshop

Cultural competence workshop has been designed to help VORP mediators to work within the cultural values of the client. This workshop will focus on VORP'S primary clients. The cultural groups under discussion are African Americans, Hmong Americans, Latin American, and Mexican American youths.

This workshop will help you to:

- 1) Become culturally aware of self and others
- 2) Be willing to acquire information about diverse groups, (historical backgrounds, family values, cultural belief systems, practices, institutions, and policies)
- 3) Recognize that cultural differences is not synonymous with cultural inferiority
- 4) Learn about the client's culture "why is it important,"
- 5) Adapt optimal service delivery to an acceptable cultural framework (skill development).

**Fresno Pacific University, Sattler 101**

**June 26,27,29**

**July 17,18,20**

**August 7,8,10**

**Cost : \$113**

**\*CEU's Included in the price\***

If you would like to reserve a spot or have a question please call Joe Montanez at 455-9803

**The Amy Wall Story is now available on DVD.**

Joe Avila and Derek Wall shared their powerful story during the Restorative Justice Conference this past February here at Fresno Pacific University.

Their lives intersected because on the evening of September 18, 1992, Joe, driving while intoxicated, hit the back of a car driven by Amy Wall, causing it to leave the road. Amy (age 17) died early Saturday morning on the 19th. Derek (age 15) was Amy's younger brother. At this conference, Joe and Derek talked about life before this event, what happened, initial responses and court proceeding, the next fifteen years, preparation and meeting, and after the meeting. This conference was the second time they met.

With their consent we filmed their conversation. If you are interested in a DVD we are asking for a *donation of \$20.00*. The proceeds will be used to bring awareness to drunk driving and to continue the fight against drunk driving.

**If you are interested in receiving a DVD please contact Holly McFarlin the Center for Peacemaking and Conflict Studies at (559) 453-3418 or [pacs@fresno.edu](mailto:pacs@fresno.edu).**

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Victim Offender Reconciliation Program of the Central Valley, Inc.

