



Victim Offender Reconciliation Program of the Central Valley, Inc
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Making a Difference...Seeing the Light

- Craig FauntLeRoy

He did not really look at me. His eyes told me he did not even want to be in the meeting. The courts said he needed to see a mediator so he came with his mother and a representative from his band of the Mono Tribe. The others asked me questions about the mediation process and what he needed to do to prepare for a meeting...he just sat there... his expression flat and distant. The only light I saw in his eyes was when I spoke of a friend I had known ...he was also of Mono blood, ... had been a State Champion wrestler and a starting linebacker on City College. I told him truthfully of my friend's quiet nature, warrior's heart, and inspiring physical presence. It was only a moment of engagement, but I hoped to build on it.

His offense had been against a non-profit close to his mountain home. The president of the board expressed a strong desire to work with the young man. They were willing to participate in mediation. I felt confident a successful mediation would soon result. A healing for the community and young man could begin...but I was wrong.

All of my subsequent attempts to contact the young man, his mother, and the tribal representative were unsuccessful. I made numerous phone calls and left several messages, but no one returned my calls. I informed the court that I had lost contact with the offender ...mediation was not going to happen. I had failed to bring the parties together to 'make things right'...to begin the restoring. ...but I was wrong. There are powers in our world beyond our perception that influence the course of a person's life.

The young man's band of Mono had been going through a change in leadership, a new probation officer became involved, and a judge said...I want to give you another chance. It had been months since my original meeting with the young man, but I received the case again. I drove up to the band's Rancheria to meet with the new

leadership. The drive was good...the mountains have their own sense of strength...of rightness.

I arrived at the band's offices and made a remarkable discovery. The young man was working as the band's receptionist. His eyes were bright, he laughed when I teased him about not saying 'Hi' to me when I walked in the door, and we chatted a bit about how I had lost him. The new tribal leader was adamant about working with the courts, the non-profit, and myself to 'make things right' for all parties.

Months had passed since the original attempt at mediation and the non-profit could not meet personally with the offender. I arranged for the young man, his mother and the tribal leadership to meet separately and offer a proposal for 'making things right' to the community organization. An agreement was reached that returned time to those who had supported him through his difficulties...60 hours of family service, tribal service, and community service would continue the healing process that had already begun with the involvement of the tribal leadership and his mother.

In his own words: "This was a mistake I made and I am sorry for making it... (and) for all this trouble. I learned not to be doing things like that again... After making that mistake I thought it was over and said to myself what a stupid idea." (Excerpts from his apology letter)

The new tribal leadership has transformed a life. There was light in the eyes of a young person that had previously been cast in shadows. It took the positive presence of the right person in the right place at the right time to make a difference.

Perhaps in some other young person's life you could be that difference...you could rekindle that light.

(See the Probation Officer's response on reverse)

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Fresno County Probation Officer Ray Guevara:

“The success of this case has really been a story of multiple parts of the community coming together cooperating and working for the benefit of one of its juveniles. The court system, probation, the non-profit, I.C.W.A. (Indian Children Welfare Act), the tribal counsel, and C.J.C./ VORP (Community Justice Conference) all played an important part acting in concert to help this young person. It’s exciting to see so many different entities and interests making such a positive difference.”

VORP Mediator Training

September 9 & 10

October 7 & 8

November 4 & 5

Fresno Pacific Universtiy

Steinert Campus Center 122

(Next to Dinning Common)

Call (559) 455-9803 for reservations or check out our website for more information: <http://vorp.org/training.shtml>

VORP Director Gets Married

In case you noticed Noelle’s name change it was for good reason. On May 28th she married Tim Nightingale, the Community Justice Conference Intake Manager, in Fresno. She will continue working in her role as director.

Meet the Interns!



Samantha Tanney– I am currently a senior at Fresno State University. I am pursuing my Bachelors degree in Victimology. Along with going to school and interning at VORP, I work for my family’s business. I hope to continue with victim advocacy in the future.



Ashley Rudd- I was born and raised her in Fresno. I am a senior at Fresno State and am majoring in Criminology with a victimology focus. Along with school and this internship I also work as a server at Tahoe Joes. I hope to work as a victim advocate in the court system after I graduate.



Chelsi Ryan– I am a senior at Fresno State majoring in Behavioral Science. I am originally from a small town called Lompoc, and I moved to Fresno for school. I learned about VORP through a friend who had interned here the year before. Although an internship is not required for my major I took it upon myself to get one in the hopes of bettering myself in the real world. I love working with juveniles and I hope to continue to do so after I graduate.



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