

Victim Offender Reconciliation Program

2529 Willow Ave., Clovis, CA 93612 - (209) 291-1120

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We thank all of you who participated in the VORP Gathering, making it a huge success. Board members, volunteers, and other "Friends of VORP" had a chance to learn to know each other, to see VORP as an organization of people, and to talk together. Fifteen of the twenty-six trained volunteer mediators were present. Altogether 58 people participated in the gathering. Our scheduled main speaker was ill and could not come. In his place, one of our board members, Buck Levis, a Municipal Court Commissioner, spoke to us. Following is a summary of his presentation.

According to Judge Fitch, approximately 1/3 of the crime in Fresno County is committed by juveniles and at this time VORP is working primarily with juveniles.

The offender deals with the system, not individuals. The offender may be found to be responsible in the system but has never been forced to take personal responsibility for his actions.

Due to delays and procedures in the court system the victim is often frustrated. In the court system they do not have the opportunity to explain what has happened to them.

VORP places personal responsibility on the offender and allows the victim to confront and deal with the actual situation and the offender himself.

In my opinion, the success of the program is attributable to a healing process for both the victim and the offender and while it may appear to the secular world as altruistic and therefore ineffective, the success is shown by the results we are receiving in the program. (In this context he referred to Proverbs 14:12.) The success of VORP is due to the efforts of volunteers, board members, staff, and financial contributors.

His presentation was well received. Thanks, Buck, on behalf of all of us for your thoughtful and helpful insights.

Of the thirty or more VORPs in the U. S. and Canada, we are the only one that is collecting the restitution and sending it on to the victim. When we were asked to do this by our probation department, we agreed since it given us more contact with both parties. Gail Boldt, our Voluntary Service Worker, has been working hard at this part of the program in addition to her other responsibilities. She has had some very interesting and meaningful experiences recently. I've asked her to share one of her cases.

Last week I facilitated the writing of a restitution contract between a 12 year old boy and Butler Mennonite Brethren Church. The boy agreed to do work around the church as restitution for a burglary he committed there almost a year ago. On the surface it seems like such a small thing--a boy does some work to replace a broken window and some stolen pencils and markers. In reality, this contract represents six months of work by me, Ken Janzen of Butler Church, the boy and his parents. More importantly, it represents a 12 year old who is trying to make some major changes in his life and a church which is trying to help him do that. Ken Janzen represented Butler Church in this case. The first time Ken and I met with the boy was in Juvenile Hall where he had been placed for running away. We found not a young criminal, but a frightened confused boy. We spent an hour with him, listening to his short life story. By the end of the time, we both felt genuine care for him and let him know that. This visit, which Ken suggested as a time to show interest and concern to the boy, laid the groundwork for the contacts and the two meetings with the boy which followed his time in Juvenile Hall. During the first of those two meetings, the boy wanted very much for us to know that he was

making some changes for the good. He told us that he was doing well in school, obeying his parents, and had found new friends who didn't get into trouble. He also told Ken he wanted to make restitution to the church. He and Ken agreed it should be in the form of work since that would give him a real feeling of responsibility and ownership toward the church. At the second meeting where the contract was signed, Butler Church's custodian, Jim Reimer, not only agreed to work overtime to supervise the boy, but befriended him and let him know that he was both wanted and needed for the upcoming work. As we walked around the grounds and looked at what needed to be done, the boy's eagerness to work with Jim was obvious to me. They agreed to begin work the following Saturday.

I believe that the victims, the people from Butler Church that were involved in working with us on this, have benefited from seeing a boy who once broke into their church now sincerely working to make things right. The church as a whole will benefit from the work he will do there. I know that the boy is benefiting greatly from the openness and care his victims are showing him. We have no guarantees at this time that he won't mess up and get into trouble again. We don't even have a guarantee at this time that he will complete his contract or do a good job. But Ken, Jim, and the church, in trusting him and working with him, have shown the kind of love that can make a difference in his life. Working on this case has been a source of hope and joy to me.

Thank you, Gail, for your high quality work and sharing this experience with us.

In September we introduced the financial plan our Board has adopted and committed themselves to implement with your help. It calls for working toward a committed income base of \$2,500 per month. The goal is to be at that level by March 1985. We wish to thank those of you who have responded to becoming a "Friend of VORP". We appreciate the new pledges and also the continuing support of many of you. Below is the financial plan and a summary of the progress made to date.

MONTHLY GIFTS GOAL	Monthly Amount	Pledged Gifts		Pledges Needed
		Sept.	Oct.	
25 - \$10 Gifts	\$250	7	8	17
17 - \$15 Gifts	\$250	2	3	14
10 - \$25 Gifts	\$250	0	1	9
5 - \$50 Gifts	\$250	0	2	3
5 - \$100 Gifts	\$500	4	4	11

ANNUAL GIFTS GOAL				
24 - \$250 Gifts(2 per month)	\$500	12	16	8
12 - \$500 Gifts(1 per month)	\$500	3	3	9
	\$2500 per month	\$875 per mo.	\$1108 per mo.	

If you have not already made a financial commitment to VORP we would like to invite you to do that now. Please detach the form below and indicate the amount you feel is appropriate for you at this time. Please make checks payable to VORP.

___ Yes, I/We would like to be a "Friend of VORP" by investing monthly in the way indicated:

 ___ \$100 ___ \$50 ___ \$25 ___ \$15 ___ \$10

___ Yes, I/We would like to be a "Friend of VORP" by investing yearly in the way indicated:

 ___ \$500 ___ \$250 ___ \$100 ___ \$50 ___ \$25

Name: _____