Victim Offender Reconciliation Program

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VORP News - December 1984 - Fresno County

"Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will among men."

VORP volunteers carry this message with them to each victim and offender they serve. While we know that God is ultimately in control, we know that evil and suffering are a part of our lives. We also know that when the spirit of Christ prevails, when care replaces hatred, greed, and maliciousness, we experience God's shalom.

On behalf of Gail, Roxanne, and myself, I want to wish all of you a very Merry Christmas. We especially want to thank all of the volunteers who have worked on cases this year. We thank the Board of Directors who have provided the support and direction we have needed. We want to thank all of you who have contributed to VORP in order to allow us to be involved in this ministry. We thank the College Community Mennonite Brethren Church for donating the office space, heat, lights, copies, etc. We thank Judge Fitch, presiding Judge of the Juvenile Court; Don Hogner, Chief Probation Officer; Joe Walden, Chief of Juvenile Probation, and all of the police and probation officers who have made referrals to us and been so cooperative and patient with us. There are many others who have encouraged us, prayed for us, or in some other way contributed to the whole of VORP, we thank you. Most of all, we thank the victims and offenders for allowing us to serve them and to be a part of their lives for a time.

WE VALUE OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH ALL OF YOU.

This year has been a real growth year for Fresno County VORP. Gail joined our staff and works full time in case management and case work. Gail has a real heart for this ministry and it really shows in her follow up with offenders who are struggling in their attempt to fulfill their contracts. It is not easy for them and Gail provides a lot of care and encouragement as well as a firm word when needed.

We became a separate organization from Criminal Justice Alternatives, Inc. who had allowed us to be part of their organization while we were first developing. We incorporated as the Victim Offender Reconciliation Program of the Central Valley, Inc. Our Board of Birectors have a vision that as the word gets out to surrounding counties that they will also want to have a VORP. Our goal is that that growth will happen in such a way that there will be maximum local ownership and minimum duplication where it is not needed. Already there are some in Tulare County who have expressed some interest and also in Madera County. While growth and maturity are necessary to better serve, the heart of VORP and success of VORP lies in the changes that happen in the lives of all of us involved.

Gail told us about a case involving the Butler Mennonite Brethren Church as the victim and has interviewed some of the people involved in that case and is sharing that with us.

The following is the text of an interview I conducted with Bill (not his real name). One year ago Bill burglarized Butler Mennonite Brethren Church and has since completed restitution by working for Jim Reimer at the church.

Q: Why did you decide to work at the church for your restitution?

Bill: I thought it would be a good thing to find out who I stole from, to say I'm sorry and to work back the restitution.

Q: How much did you work and what did you do?

Bill: I worked four weekends. We trimmed six trees, cut up the wood, stacked it, and hauled it away.

Q: Was it hard work?

Bill: Sometimes. Most of the time it was just me and Jim doing things so it was pretty easy.

Thank you so much for all of

Q: Did you anjoy it?

Bill: Yeah. I got a good relationship with Jim. It helped me to feel better about myself, that I worked back what I did and said I'm sorry.

Q: How do you feel about the church now?

Bill: I think of it more as a place of God after working there and seeing how nice all the people there were and all that they did for me. I'd never rob them again.

Q: Is there anything else you want to say about Jim?

Bill: He seemed really concerned about me. He always knew if I was down or feeling good. He was a person to talk to, who always understood. He's probably the best friend I have right now.

## A MESSAGE FROM OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS CHAIRMAN

While VORP has not been operating as a separate entity for a full year now, the end of 1984 marks a good time to reflect on how the program has matured.

The training of volunteers and their successful handling of cases has gone very well. You can see in this and other recent newsletters how many people have been affected by VORP's program. We have also done better with financing the program, although there have been some disappointments. An attempt to receive Office of Criminal Justice Planning funds failed even though staff had ranked us number 7 of over 80 programs for funding. We certainly have things to learn about the political process of receiving grants. A grant of over \$4,000.00 from Mennonite Mutual Aid will help us greatly here at the end of the year. The process of getting regular pledges from interested individuals has been doing better, but we are a long way yet from our goal of receiving \$2,500.00 per month in individual and church gifts. We need your continued support in this very critical area of our ministry.

The board will continue to seek funding from sources such as United Way and Mennonite Mutual Aid, but is satisfied that the organization needs for its base of support to come from interested individuals who believe in the program as part of the ministry of reconciliation. Thank you for your part in that program, and be sure to let us know ways in which you would be interested in increased involvement. If you have not made a pledge of financial support, now is the best time to do so.

## Duane Heffelbower

As you are reflecting on this past year and deciding what your involvements will be this next year, consider volunteering as a VORP mediator and/or consider becoming a "Friend of VORP" by making a pledged contribution.

VOLUNTEER TRAINING - Our next 8 hour Volunteer Training will be offered on January 14 & 21, 1985 from 6:00-10:00 each evening. Pre-registration is requested. No fees. If you or someone you know is interested you may call our office, 291-1120, or mail the form which will be included in the January newsletter.

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'FRIEND OF VORP" PLENGE FORMI/We would like to be a "Friend of VORP" by investing monthly in the way indicated:	
\$100\$50\$25\$15\$10otherI/We would like to be a "Friend of VORP" by investing yearly in the way indicated:\$500\$250\$100\$50\$25other	
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May God's love bless you and challenge you as you decide how yor will live this next year.

Shalom,

Ron Claassen, Program Director