



Victim Offender Reconciliation Program

VORP of the Central Valley, Inc. News
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Over 100 people gathered in celebration at our Third Annual VORP Gathering. One highlight of the evening was when at each table a volunteer mediator told of an experience they had been involved in where victim and offender came together and worked at "making things right" between them, justice in action. Dan Van Ness, president of Justice Fellowship, presented a stimulating overview of the problems and opportunities we face in criminal justice across the nation and his perspective on how the church can get involved in helpful ways. He strongly affirmed our local VORP efforts and how they are an example that he shares as he encourages others. I know that I was personally enriched by his presence and thoughts. Thanks Dan.

Our Presiding Juvenile Judge, A. Dennis Caeton, was not able to attend due to an out of town engagement but sent a letter of explanation and encouragement. Included in his letter was the following:

"As you know, I am completely committed to the Victim Offender Reconciliation Program. To know that there are citizens out there who are willing to take time away from their families and personal lives and businesses in order to in every respect 'make the wounded whole' is an inspiration to those of us working within the system and invokes a new commitment and dedication to our jobs. If there is anything I can ever do to assist your fine effort, you can rely upon me."

We appreciate our fine working relationship with Judge Caeton and other Criminal Justice System Officials.

Gregg Stobbe put a lot of effort into planning and coordinating to make our Gathering such a great evening. Thanks. Greg has been working with VORP on staff in the areas of public relations, restitution follow-up, volunteer recruitment, and in addition carries a significant case load. He has written up a recent VORP experience for us this month. The names and some details have been changed to protect identities.

Dark shadows followed four lads shooting baskets at a local high school outdoor court. The November sun was fading and the game was drawing to a close. The leader threw up a 3-pointer and closed out a long afternoon.

Home was eight miles away by city bus; however, the boys had stayed talking at the school and missed the last bus. Upon realizing this, the leader huddled the group together and devised a plan to get home. The lads did get home that night, but at the expense of two unsuspecting boys on bicycles.

The referral came from informal probation, "Four youths cited for strong armed robbery." I initially spoke with all of the youths, but only two agreed to the VORP process. This is a story of one of them.

I first went to Bobbie's home early in January to share the VORP process and to ask him to participate and meet with one of the boys from whom he stole the bicycle. Bobbie wasn't there, but his mother, shamed and scared, was anxious to meet with the victims.

Later, I had the opportunity to meet with the Dhillons, whose son Jerry had been victimized. Jerry and his parents were very angry and upset that someone had upset their lives with violence and robbery. The family expressed a violation of personal space as even Jerry's sister was affected by this act despite her not being present when it happened. They were tentative but agreed to meet with Bobbie and his parents in hopes of getting answers and restitution.