



Victim Offender Reconciliation Program

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"The service gap in the Juvenile Division alone is about 1500 cases. Last year VORP worked with just over 400 cases and we would have liked to have referred closer to 2,000." These were the challenging words of Joe Walden, Juvenile Division Director at a meeting of church leaders gathered at the probation department. In a cooperative effort between the probation department and VORP, church leaders were invited to hear about the value and work of VORP and invited to get involved.

Judge Caeton, Presiding Juvenile Court Judge said, "The Victim Offender Reconciliation Program sounds like poetry to me and I am wholeheartedly supportive." He laid out the problem of juvenile crime and the value of the VORP process for both victims and offenders and invited church leaders to do what they could to get more volunteer participation.

One of the results of this meeting is that a volunteer mediator training is now scheduled for volunteers at Peoples Church for early this fall. Our mission statement says that our primary purpose is "to encourage and assist the church in its mission of peacemaking in the conflict between victims and offenders of crime."

Virginia Daily, a member of Emmanuel Lutheran Church, has worked with many victims and offenders over the last couple of years and has agreed to share a recent experience with us. Some names and details have been changed to protect the identities of the participants.

When I first got the case and saw that the theft involved the taking of one case of beer, I wondered if ABC Mini Mart would even want to put forth the effort of going through the VORP process! Here goes a try, I thought as the phone was ringing. The victim's daughter answered and said that her mother, Marge (owner of the Mini Mart), would have to call me back due to her irregular and busy schedule. I thanked her. Later that afternoon Marge called. When we talked she said that she would like to meet with the offender. She said that each year they lose a lot of money (a little at a time) due to just this type of theft. She'd like to have a chance to let maybe just one person hear her side, since her family is dependent on the money she brings home after the losses each month. She also shared with me the fact that her son had been in a lot of trouble as a teenager and would have liked this chance for him in the beginning. I thought, "Thank you Lord for her eagerness!"

John (18 years old) was harder to reach. He had moved since the referral had been made. He lives with several different relatives from time to time. I was finally able to reach his sister and she seem most eager to help him and to be there for him if he needed her in the future. In talking to John, he said this had been his first time in trouble and that it had been done on a dare by friends. He said he'd like to meet with and repay the owner of the store.

The VORP process and goals had been explained to both and I felt that it would be a good meeting. The night for the meeting was agreed to by both and the place for the meeting was going to be at the ABC Mini Mart where the theft occurred.

I arrived early. Marge arrived about 10 minutes later and John just after that. Introductions were completed and we went into the office.

After introductory comments and agreement to the groundrules for the meeting, Marge went first. She told of her feelings and frustrations with this type of problem whether it be a prank, or whatever the

