

## Victim Offender Reconciliation Program

VORP of the Central Valley, Inc. News May 1989

"You volunteers go out there powerless yet you accomplish something that we can never accomplish with force." These were a few of the remarks of Judge Caeton at our ANNUAL GATHERING. About 100 volunteers, financial contributors, and other interested friends gathered for a delicious potluck meal and an evening focused on Restorative Justice. Dr. Elmer Martens opened the program with a devotional focusing on several Biblical stories of conflict and reconciliation. Kay Cone, a victim, told about her anger and anxiety and how meeting with the offender and receiving a monthly check now for 56 months has really helped her to deal with the offense. Jim Kratzer shared how with the help of VORP he confronted people he had once trusted who had forged checks for more than two thousand dollars. He didn't want them to be incarcerated or even develop a criminal record but he did want them to take responsibility.

Judge Caeton, a Superior Court Judge for 10 years; has worked with criminal law his entire career and as Presiding Juvenile Judge for the last three years, said "I have never seen a victim satisfied by the court. Tonight I just heard from two." Following are some additional quotes from his presentation.

"Things are more complex than we thought. We thought linear thinking would give us the answers, that we could define things and follow them to their logical conclusion." "Then we found out that light is not just waves as I was taught but it is also particles. So light is waves and it is particles. Maybe that is like Jesus being both human and divine."

"Paradox is part of our lives. Force is a way we can control people and make them do what we want. In the criminal justice system we force people to do what we want and for a period of time they may. But positive changes don't result from this force. You VORP volunteers go cut there powerless and it appears that people are more satisfied and sometimes significant changes happen." "This paradox is not just operative in the area of criminal justice. Last year I decided to move away from control and use of power in my family relationships and especially with my 10 year old son. It has made a world of difference in my opinion, I'd highly recommend it."

"The people in the criminal justice system are good people and the system is working, so far as it is keeping order. But VORP is a radically different model of intervention which can bring about profound changes in offenders, victims, and volunteers."

"VORP volunteers are providing a valuable service and it needs to be expanded."

Following Judge Caeton's presentation we had about a half hour of lively discussion. It included looking at the hard issues like what about VORP in more serious cases and what is the most appropriate funding source? It was a good evening. If you couldn't make it this year we hope maybe you will be able to join us next year.

VORP is a cooperative effort of many and while we noted that mediators and contributors do not participate for recognition it is appropriate to recognize what people are doing. Volunteers at the GATHERING included, Mark Allen, Ed Barton, John Bergey, John Border, Bill Botzong, Bill Braun, Roxanne Claassen, Jinny Daily, Mark Gudgel, Dianna Fain, Allen Guenther, Don Hiebert, Shari Horton, Stan Isaac, David Janzen, Shannon Jost, Tom Loper, Jerry Linscheid, Sharon Martin, George Martzen, Dalton Reimer, Duane Ruth-Heffelbower, Jerry Reimer, Gretchen Schmidt, Barbara Scopec, Richard Stone, Russell Templeton, Jim Van Wagenen, Elmer Martens, Mable Reese.

An evening like this doesn't happen without a lot of behind the scenes planning and work. Shannon Jost, a VORP staff member through the Mennonite Brethren Christian Service Program, devoted a lot of time and energy to make the evening a good one. Thanks Shannon.

Gretchen Schmidt, our case manager is sharing a case with us this month. Some names and details have been changed to protect identities.

Neal, the offender, was an eighteen year old. He and two others stole eighteen prize roosters including a grand champion, from Charles's chicken house. Only four survived and were returned to the victim. I couldn't help but wonder why someone would steal roosters. We scheduled the meeting three times before we finally got together. The meeting was at Charles's home.

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I arrived early for the meeting. Neal and Eileen (Neal's guardian) arrived several minutes later and before I could even get a hello out, they and Charles were discussing the raising of a variety of animals. It appeared they already knew each other but I found out later that they hadn't ever met before. The Charles raises roosters, sheep, goats, and pigs along with a few more unnamed species. After listening to their conversation for a few minutes, I realized that Neal and Eileen raise almost the same animals with an addition of 60 cages of rabbits. I thought I liked animals, but this gave animal lover a new meaning. This went on for twenty minutes, when finally I climbed in the middle of the table and asked if they would like to discuss the matter we came to discuss. was a rest of the property of the second a to have take

Neal explained that he and some of his friends had been in the area and had been drinking. They were pretty buzzed, as Neal put it. One of his friends had suggested they "get some birds" and knew of Charles's roosters. Neal didn't go into exactly how they had gotten the roosters off the cords nor how they carried eighteen of them. It probably would have been a sight to see. Neal had taken a few home with him. Neal stated he felt awful about it the next day because he knew how it would feel if someone took some of his animals. He was very remorseful. Charles expressed how he felt about the theft. At first he just felt bummed. Then he got angry because the roosters were worth, a lot of money and some were his children's projects for 4-H and other things. He said he had heard something that night and had even looked out the back door but didnit see anything so went back to bed. Charles also told about another time when a rooster was stolen but he had caught the boy at an auction trying to sell t. He turned around and gave it back to the boy and told him he could keep it. Charles told Neal if he ever wanted a rooster just to ask and he, would give him one. Charles said he wished Neal would have done that instead of stealing them. He would have been happy to give him one. Charles stated he was not one to hold grudges and everything would be fine between them. PATORITE WAS IN LINE TRUCKE

elle ad dods applicants. Their their The foosters were worth \$2,200. Neal was responsible for a third of this: Neal got a job in construction and said he would be able to pay \$100 a month. Charles was concerned that this might be hard on Neal and suggested \$50 a month. They decided to leave the monthly amount flexible between \$50 and \$100, whatever Neal could afford during each month. This doesn't happen that often when the victim asks less per month that the offender wants to pay.

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The next VORP mediator training is scheduled for May 23 and 30. for details.

VORP is supported by individuals and churches. If you haven't already made a pledge or ទាប់កាក់ ស្រីនៅវិប្រកាស់ donation, this would be a good month. All expenses have been met so far this year and had \$700 in the bank at the end of April. This is the good news but obviously it doesn't give us all a lot of security. Please consider making a financial contribution so that VORP can be expanded and more victims, offenders, and volunteer mediators will be able to give restorative justice a chance.

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Ron Claassen, Program Director

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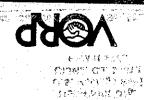
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