



Victim Offender Reconciliation Program

VORP of the Central Valley, Inc.
February 1990 News

January income did not cover January expenses!! We have no surplus from last year or other reserves to draw from. We are not complaining about needing reserves, just letting you know that the monthly expenses do need to be covered in order for us to operate at our current level and growth will require some additional contributions to cover training more volunteers and supporting and coordinating their efforts. As you saw last month in the review of 1989, our total budget is less than the amount to incarcerate two juveniles for a year. We worked with 536 referrals. There is no waste or lavish living. Please come and visit us and you are always welcome to look at our financial statements.

Thanks to you who so faithfully contribute!! If you are not yet contributing to VORP, please consider a regular monthly amount. No amount is too small. A \$5 contribution per month from each person receiving this newsletter would provide enough to almost triple our number of referrals. Thanks for your consideration!

"You're the people who help work out restitution and then make friends." This was the response of the brother of an offender when Elaine introduced herself as being from VORP. Reconciliation is our goal and restitution is one important component in working toward making things right between people when there has been an injustice. While I would generally make sure that it is clear that it is a voluntary process and that the process includes a preparation stage where commitments are made to be constructive in the process and then a meeting where we recognize the injustice, restore the equity (restitution) and make agreements for our future intentions, and then become accountable for our agreements; I think that this brother has a pretty good idea of what VORP is about.

We don't expect that everyone will end up best friends and we know that we couldn't force that even if we wanted to. We do know that compared to feelings before they start, most victims and offenders certainly are a lot more friendly after working through the VORP process.

This month John Bergey, Mennonite Community Church, is sharing a story. Some names and details have been changed to protect identities.

Egg throwing at a house-- this was a new one for me. Four boys ages 12 to 14 were caught in a condominium complex throwing eggs one evening. They all lived in the same complex. Twins, Ron and Rick and a neighbor boy Mark were the ones I was to work with, the fourth boy was not referred.

It was one of those cases where ill feelings had been going on for some time. The victim, Joe (about 35), who I talked to first was quite open and friendly. He and his friend owned the condo they lived in and said that the boys often had their friends over to the pool and recreation room and were noisy and had more than the allotted number of friends there. Joe told them several times to quiet down and asked their friends to leave. This had gone on for months. One evening Joe heard a noise outside his room and soon found out someone had thrown some eggs at his wall. The next week it happened again, this time he ran out and chased the boys down. He was very angry at the time and in spite of the boys' mother coming out and apologizing, Joe decided to report it to the police. He didn't see any good alternatives.

Ron and Rick said that they went over the next day and offered to clean it up and he just cursed at them loudly as he had the night before. Mark also went over and was allowed him to clean the windows. It was hard to tell if his openness was based on how Mark presented the idea or if he was closed to Ron and Rick for other reasons. Ron and Rick thought it was because their ethnic background is different than Mark's.

Joe agreed to meet with Mark but not with Ron and Rick. The meeting with Mark and his mother was cordial. Mark agreed to pay his part of the cost to repaint the wall. For the amount owed to repair the damage, I talked to the property manager, Mr. Martin, and he also agreed to meet with Ron and Rick. After talking about the incident, they agreed to pay their share of the \$100 it cost to repaint the wall. The whole incident was an embarrassment for the boys and their mother. Their mother wrote a check for the amount with an explanation of how the boys would be working to repay her. I think the boys are very unlikely to repeat "egg throwing."

In our further conversation, I discovered that Ron and Rick would be going with their parents to Bangkok, Thailand for Christmas. I asked if they would like to call Mark Siemens who was formerly a VORP volunteer mediator. Their mother was eager to call so I gave them his number. Last week I called her and she said they had a nice trip and talked to Mark Siemens on the phone but didn't get to visit him.

Thanks John!

VORP needs more people like John who are willing to be trained and then give some time and energy to help bring peace in a situation that is at best in a stand off or perhaps escalating toward something that might become worse. The training consists of two four hour evenings and on-the-job training as needed. Volunteers help select the cases that are appropriate for them. The training is free if you work with cases and if you decide not to take cases a \$15 donation is requested to help cover costs. The skills are transferable to family, work, church, and other settings where we sometimes find ourselves in the midst of conflict.

Each year we have a gathering of volunteers, donors, board members and others interested in celebrating the VORP ministry/service. Now is the time to make your reservations for our 1990 VORP Gathering. Our speaker will be Howard Zehr, Director of the Office of Criminal Justice for Mennonite Central Committee, one of the founding fathers and chief visionary of the VORP movement. He has written much of the material that has both influenced and promoted VORP. His latest book on Restorative Justice will be released this April. Call Shannon at the VORP office to reserve your tickets. There is no charge but tickets will be required in order to help us plan for adequate tables and chairs. Please come and bring a guest. The meal will be a potluck. Please join in the celebration.

DATE: March 15, 1990

TIME: 6:30 - 9:30 pm

LOCATION: College Community MB Church
(This is also the location of the VORP office.)

Meal: Potluck

A - M, Main Dish and Rolls

N - Z, Salad & Dessert

Shalom
Ron Claassen

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