

VORP is a process for "making things as right as possible" between people who are divided by an injustice. Reconciliation is not an accident. It happens because many of you have supported the development of a structure and training of mediators to facilitate the process.

Nothing tells it better than a story, especially when you have a chance to hear the story from both the victim's and offender's perspectives.

## Purse Snatching From Shopping Mall- Part 2: Victim's Perspective

Our story this month and last month is actually the same story. Last month it was told from the perspective of the offender and this month from the perspective of the victim. The mediator in the case was Linda Olthoff and Barbara Toews interviewed them. I have done some editing. Names and some details have been changed to protect identities.

The crime incident was a purse snatching from the parking lot of a shopping mall. The offender was surprised when in court the victim said, "he doesn't have a clue what he's done to me." Hearing her concern, the judge told her about VORP and the case was referred. After the VORP experience, the offender said, "she was right, I didn't have a clue." "It was scary at first but by the time you're done, you kind of felt you were friends." (Request December 1993 Newsletter for Offender's Perspective.)

The victim's perspective:

"I was really upset that everyone was telling me what a good kid he was. Everybody, the police that arrested him, the public defender that talked to me on the phone, all I heard was what a good kid he was and he just screwed up. To me this was a bad person, this was not what good people do."

"He was late to the joint meeting. I wondered, what am I going to say? After weeks of talking about it with my husband, am I going to remember everything? Is he really going to listen or is he... is it going to be a waste of time? I want it to be productive. I want to know if he is upset with what he did? Will he just put on an act? Or maybe he will just say 'get out of here lady, I'll pay you your money.' I was nervous!!!"

"Then, when he came and we started the meeting, I was asked to summarize what he said as he told what he did. I was real miffed! Up until that point, I had heard about what a good kid he was, and I could get absolutely no information. Nothing was for me, nothing, nothing!!! Nobody was listening to me so I thought wait a minute this is my chance not his. But it worked out OK. A lot of questions were answered for me in listening to what he did and why he did it."

"When it was my turn to tell how it impacted me, he had a hard time looking at me. He had a hard time actually looking at me when I talked. He (age 18) had tears in his eyes, his mom had tears in her eyes, she was crying. When he tried to summarize what I had said to him, his voice would crack, he was having a real hard time actually saying back to me what he had done. It just didn't come out real easy for him. It meant something."

"When we talked about restitution I got pretty much what I asked for. I asked for what I knew was in my purse. I asked for reimbursement of costs in recovering my drivers license, registration for my car, and checks that had to be canceled. I still have to go to court on one of the checks he wrote. The business is trying to take me to court to collect on the check, even though they got their merchandise back. They're still trying to collect from me. I missed some time from work. It took me 3 days to reconstruct my financial records since I was carrying them with me that day due to some exceptional circumstances. It took 3 days going to and from the Bank and sitting down with them and their computers to get it all reconstructed. So he also paid me for the time I missed from work. I didn't ask for pain and suffering or whatever. I just wanted back what I had lost monetarily. He gave me that back."

"He seemed to change as we talked and that helped. He was telling the truth, he wasn't lying. He knew he was wrong and he never tried to hide that."

"He worked hard to pay me back. He paid me back in a 3 month period, close to \$1000.00. He picked weeds in a cotton field, 3 Bee (newspaper) routes, it wasn't easy labor what he did to earn the money. His parents aren't well off from what I understand. It's not like they gave it to him to pay me back. That meant something that he had to work hard to pay me back."

"To face him and let this out kind of helps close it for me.

I needed to meet him and find out that he was a good kid, he was going to school, was good in sports, came from a good family and he made a bad mistake. It was hard to hear all that but I had to see it for myself. It was hard but afterward it made me feel a lot better. So it helped settle it, it gave me closure."

"I let them [offender and parents] know that when it went to court, I didn't think it warranted nine months. I know they [district attorney] wanted him to serve 9 months. I told them that I was going to tell the judge that I didn't want him to do that. He paid restitution. I was satisfied with him having to hear me out, he had to work hard. I asked that he didn't have a drivers license, that's a given. The judge also laid on all kinds of stuff about drivers license, checking account, other fees he had to pay, and community service. He didn't get off scott free, there was a lot."

*(Continued on back page)*

"Justice? Well, he was caught. He paid for what he took from me. Not only that, when he faced me he realized what he had done to somebody else. He realized there is somebody that he hurt and was scared of him. (I was scared of him. In our meeting he was upset when I told him I was scared of him. That bothered him. He didn't want me to be scared of him.) I got the satisfaction of having him listen. He had to sit there and listen to me and then I really think the sentence he got matched what he had done. He did have to pay back, he was accountable for what he did, he stood up and took what he had coming to him. He didn't get to walk away from it, he didn't cry about having to pay me back. Just having all that happen, yeah, it feel like there was justice."

"If I hadn't been able to talk with him, it would have turned out totally different because I would have told the lawyer to stick it to him, the kids got an attitude, deserves anything you can throw at him whether or not he is a good kid, first time or not."

"No, what you guys (VORP) did was just great. That following Wednesday at court, my husband wasn't able to be with me. So when I got to court there were lot of different people standing in the hallway, talking to lawyers about drugs, deals, and rehabilitation. His [the offender's] mom came down and said I could come sit with them if I wanted. So I went down and sat with them. I wouldn't have done that before."

"I went from one extreme to the other, I really did. I didn't want to stay bitter and hateful, that's not good for me to carry around. You know, he stole my purse, and he couldn't give the contents back but he gave the monetary value of it back. And I believe that he was sorry for what he did. I don't think I could have asked for any more than that."

"I wish this would happen more often. I think putting them in jail is not always the answer, especially with an offense like this. What's the use?"

"Do I feel restored? Well, I still get a little nervous in a crowd with my purse. I stand in the double glass doors to make sure there is nobody suspicious walking in the parking lot or driving right near me before I take off out that door. So that caution is still there. It takes time for that to wear off. I'll probably always be a little uneasy. But, I'm not constantly upset about it anymore. I feel happy and positive about what happened. That was a better way to end it, it didn't end on negative feelings."

Thanks anonymous victim!!

You could learn to facilitate a process that facilitates justice, restoration, and reconciliation. The next VORP training events are scheduled for February 1, 8, and 15 (Tuesdays from 6:30 - 9:30pm), March 11 and 12 (Fri 6:30 - 9:30pm & Sat 8:30am - 3:30pm), and May 9, 16, and 23 (Mondays from 6:30 - 9:30pm). Cost is \$75, however, for those who work with at least three cases the training is subsidized and the cost to the participant is just \$15.

Please remember, VORP RELIES ENTIRELY ON YOUR DONATIONS for financial support. There are more cases than VORP currently has capability to work with. Our Board of Directors is committed to expanding VORP as finances are available. If everyone receiving this newsletter would send \$25 this month VORP could cover all of the expenses to expand case load by 15% in 1994.

Shalom

Ron Claassen, Director

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**Victim Offender Reconciliation Program**