

VORP: From Lose/Lose to Win/Win

The essence of VORP is the transformation of a lose/lose situation into a win/win. The Bible calls that forgiveness. It doesn't mean acting as if the offense didn't matter. It doesn't mean we ignore the offense. It doesn't mean saying "I forgive you and I don't want to see you again." Forgiveness happens when the violator/violated agree that the injustice has been recognized (confession), a good faith effort has been made to make reparations where possible (restitution and grace), and accountable agreements have been made for a future in which the injustice is not repeated (repentance). When these agreements are made, the ground is prepared and the seeds have been sown for trust to grow. When these agreements are kept, trust grows and may even flourish.

A "Tagging" Case Ends in Win/Win

■ *VORP stories are a real life demonstration of a lose/lose being transformed into a win/win. Our VORP story this month is from Heather Compton. Heather is a student at Fresno State University and a member of Northwest Church. Names and some details have been changed to protect identities.*

In some of my cases involving juvenile offenders who "tag", the parent(s) have minimized the offense. In some other cases their attitude has been "Hey, no one got hurt!" When this happens, the juvenile, seeing his parent's reactions tends to follow suit. But in this case it was different! It was during my first telephone contact that I knew this case had a definite chance of having a positive outcome. Both Damon and his mother were very receptive to meeting with me.

At the individual meeting, Damon was very open to discussing the offense, how he and his friends decided to just go out one day and "tag" signs. Damon said this was his first time to ever "tag" and that it would also be his last. He even stated that he was, in a sense, glad that he was caught. He also expressed a sadness he was feeling for disappointing his mother. He expressed his remorse and recognition of the injustice he had done. He wanted to get back on track. His mother then shared how she had noticed a change in Damon's attitude and actions after his father's death only several months prior. "Before that Damon was a good son," she said. She also expressed regret for not being there as much for him. She had to earn more and had decided she needed a degree. She had started attending classes at the University. Both Damon and his mother agreed to meet with Dave and cooperate with the VORP process.

Dave is the representative of the City of Fresno who has met with me and some other VORP mediators in other cases. He is supportive of the VORP process and a great person to work with.

The joint meeting progressed even better than the individual meeting. Dave has an incredible way of communicating with juveniles, but doesn't sugar coat anything. This approach is very helpful. Damon, now even more than before, truly understood the

extent of the seriousness of his offense. Then came the big surprise! When we started talking about what could be done to make things as right as possible and to prevent it in the future, Damon brought up the idea of getting his friends to stop "tagging." He wanted to tell them that it wasn't cool to "tag" and that they could find other things to do with their time. They also agreed that it would be good if Damon were to do some work for the city as a way of repaying the financial cost of the offense. Dave was going to look into the possibility of Damon participating in a summer program with the city (development of the program was pending) to make restitution for the damage he had done. The meeting ended with a handshake and a sense of restoration for everyone.

I made contact with Damon approximately a month after the meeting. He was keeping his agreements and doing well in school. I believe that it was through the care and concern of all parties involved that Damon was able to see that when one makes a mistake it is possible, by taking responsibility, to get back on the right "track" again!

Thank s
Heather!!

1st Annual VORP Art Benefit Featuring: *An Evening in Margaret Hudson's Backyard*

Date: October 15, 1994

Time: 5 to 7 pm

Location: 4247 N. Thorne Ave.

Entertainment:
Live Classical Music

Food: *Gourmet Coffee &
Dessert*

Cost: \$15 donation

*Chance to win a large Margaret Hudson sculpture with purchase of ticket(s).

(For more info. call VORP at
291-1120)

Thanks to Barbara and Linda, We'll Miss You!

Barbara Toews has completed two years of voluntary service at VORP. Barbara's primary responsibilities were case management and volunteer mediator support. She said that one of the things she enjoyed most about her work with VORP was her contact with so many people who volunteer their personal time to work with VORP Cases. Barbara will be moving to Lancaster, PA where she will be the Director of an emerging VORP.

Linda Olthoff has also completed two years of voluntary service at VORP. Linda's primary responsibility was restitution follow-up and liaison with the probation department. In monthly meetings Linda often listed "following up with offenders who are late in their payments" as part of the job which was most difficult, unpleasant or frustrating. In our "exit meeting" she said that she learned and benefited most from continuing to work constructively with offend-

ers who were the most difficult to work with. Linda will enter Law School at the University of Illinois this fall and then decide how to pursue her interest and commitment to Restorative Justice and Peacemaking.

Linda and Barbara have impacted the lives of many people in Fresno. They have demonstrated and shared the love of God with many people. They have left VORP with improved procedures and greater accumulated wisdom. Each, in their own way, contributed humor and enthusiasm along with dedicated competent hard work. It has been a wonderful experience to work with both Linda and Barbara.

Barbara and Linda's voluntary service in our community is a good example where everyone benefits. The Fresno Community has clearly benefited from their contribution and they each report that they've benefited by being here. Another win/win situation.

OUR COMMUNITY NEEDS YOUR HELP!!!!!!

You could become a volunteer VORP Mediator. The next training sessions are scheduled for Sept. 8, 15, and 22; Oct. 14 and 15; and Nov. 15, 22, and 26. The fee is \$15 for those who plan to work with at least three cases. The training fee is \$75 for others. Call Laura or Kathy (291-1120) to Register. Participants report that the training is helpful in resolving conflict at home, school, church and anywhere else you find yourself in community.

VORP RELIES ENTIRELY ON YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS!! Monthly contributions of \$10 and \$20 and annual contributions of \$100-\$500 are what sustain VORP. No contribution is too small. If you wonder what your \$10 contribution could do, please remember that if only a very small percentage of the Fresno population joined you, VORP could meet its annual budget and even expand its services to meet the need. Please send your contribution this month!

Shalom
Ron Claassen

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Victim Offender Reconciliation Program