

# VORP

NEWS

of the Central Valley, Inc.

February 1997

## VORP recognizes the friends who made peacemaking possible in 1996

by Ron Claassen

### VORP is a Community Building Process

VORP meetings range from a minimum of 3 or 4 people—victim, offender, (offender's parent or other responsible adult if juvenile offender) and mediator—to 20, including extended family, victim support, community and faith community representatives, and government representatives. If all are willing, the VORP mediator leads the group in a peacemaking process:

- (1) recognize the injustices (tell/listen/clarity/summarize the events and impact in the violation and offender accepting responsibility);
- (2) restore the equity or balance between them as much as possible (agree on what can be done to make things as right as possible now—realizing that to some extent this is always symbolic, restoring equity is a combination of restitution and grace);
- (3) clarify future intentions (establish plans, commitments, and accountability process for a safer, more respectful, and more just future).

When individuals and the group agree that this process has been completed, forgiveness and reconciliation begin to happen and trust starts to grow. Victim, offender, and community members experience restoration and reintegration. As agreements are kept, trust grows.

VORP is a community building process. VORP is a character building process. VORP clarifies and strengthens community values. VORP is a peacemaking process.

VORP, now starting its 15th year in Fresno, happens because of the efforts of many

people. The primary support and initiative for VORP has come from churches and individuals who understand and care that God's desire is for people to experience shalom, peace and justice as a result of right relationships between individuals and with God.

### 46 Churches are Sustaining Friends with VORP

These churches have formalized their mutually-supportive relationship with VORP. If your church is listed below, thanks. If your church is not listed below, please contact Elaine Enns (455-5843) or Laura Fultz (291-1120).

VORP Sustaining Friend Churches in 1996 were:

Apostolic Revival Tabernacle, Bethany Church, Bethel Temple Church, Butler Avenue Church, Campus Baptist Church, College Church of Christ, College Community Church, College Congregational Church, Downtown Church, Easton Southern Baptist Church.

Faith United Methodist Fellowship, First Congregational Church, First Mennonite Church (Reedley), First Presbyterian Church, Fresno Christian Fellowship United Methodist Church, Fresno Christian Reformed Church, Friends Community Church, God's Family Church, Harmony Freewill Baptist Church, Iglesia De Dios, Lord of All Nations Church, Memorial United Methodist Church.

Mennonite Community Church, New Hope Community Church, North Fresno Church, Northpark Community Church, Northwest Church, Our Lady of Victory, Peace Community Church, The Peoples Church, Pilgrim Armenian Congregational Church, Redeemer Lutheran Church, Reedley Mennonite Brethren Church, Sanger First Presbyterian Church, Second Baptist Church, St. Columba's Episcopal Church, St. Luke's United Methodist Church, St. Paul Newman Center.

Trinity Lutheran Church, United Japanese Christian Church, Valley Christian Center, Vineyard Christian Fellowship (Clovis), Vineyard Christian Fellowship (Fresno), Wesley United Methodist Church, West Side Revival Tabernacle, Westside Church of God.

### Staff transition is part of our lives

Staff transition is part of our lives because VORP relies heavily on short term (one-two years) volunteers. Although they are short term, they serve with energy and enthusiasm combined with high quality skills and competency.

This year one volunteer from the Mennonite Voluntary Service (MVS) program has ended his term. Trevor Siemens returned to his home in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan after serving two years. Trevor's primary responsibility was to follow up with offenders who had made agreements. Trevor also carried many other responsibilities. Trevor contributed a positive and encouraging spirit to VORP. We miss his presence and wish him well in his future.

Nestor Gerente served with VORP for one

year through the Trainee Program of Mennonite Central Committee. Nestor returned to the Philippines in July. His hope was to come back again for further training and finally start VORP in the Philippines. He has now been accepted into the master's program in conflict management and peacemaking, with an emphasis in restorative justice, at Fresno Pacific University.

Two new volunteers are Victoria Buksbazen and Jay Griffith. Victoria is from New York and is a recent graduate of State University of New York College at Geneseo. She is a full time volunteer with the Mennonite Voluntary Service program and is assuming primary responsibility for followup in addition to many other responsibilities. Victoria brings a wonderful sense of humor along with her dedication and competency. Jay Griffith recently graduated from Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary. He is volunteering half time while working in sales to support himself. Jay sets up new cases and works with volunteers with cases in progress. We are grateful for Jay's willingness to serve in this way and enjoy his cooperative spirit.

Also new to our staff this year is Julius Lockett. Because of some increase in our funding and substantial financial sacrifice on his part, we were able to hire him full time. In addition to B.S. and M.S. degrees, Julius brings a background of having served for 10 years as a police officer in the Atlanta police department. He is committed to Restorative Justice and has substantially improved our procedures and our working relationship with probation. He also brings pastoral experience and a wonderful spirit to our office.

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## VORP relies on You!

Please don't wait. VORP can only grow if financial support grows. If you aren't actively supporting VORP with volunteer time, prayer, or financial support, we are praying that this will be the year you start.

The need is great!

## Volunteer Mediators Needed!

VORP mediators learn and practice peacemaking skills they can use in the home, workplace, and congregation.

The next trainings are scheduled on March 10, 17 & 24; April 18 & 19; and May 29, June 5 & 12.

Call Julius or Victoria at 291-1120 for details.

Laura Fultz is continuing part time while attending seminary and working on a counseling degree. VORP continues to contract for some time from several members of the faculty at Fresno Pacific University's Center for Peacemaking and Conflict Studies: Elaine Enns (now in her seventh year with VORP), Duane Ruth-Heffelbower (attorney and former VORP board member), and Ron Claassen (founding director).

## **VORP board of directors assumes both financial and policy responsibility**

VORP is organized as a non-profit, public benefit corporation which is guided by a board of directors who come from a wide range of churches in the area. Board members shoulder significant responsibility so that hundreds can serve as mediators, and thousands of victims and offenders can have the opportunity to experience restorative justice.

This year has been a year of transition for board members as well. Rick Gaston, Kay Matheson, Jim Parks, Rich Smith, and Pam Hatwig completed their service with our board this year. Each board member has an impact on VORP, and while their formal service on the board has ended, their contributed wisdom continues to provide direction. Several new members are being considered to fill these vacancies. Our current board members are Mike Manghera, President; Dave Kleschold, Vice President; Carol Fransen, Secretary-Treasurer; Michael Blue; and Ron Claassen.

Thanks again to those who are currently serving, are considering serving, and to all those who have served in the past.

## **VORP mediators are volunteers who put their values and faith into action**

Volunteer VORP Mediators give up personal time to help victims, offenders, and the community find the opportunity in what otherwise seems like a totally negative experience.

VORP mediators in 1996 were: Danny Aguirre, Tracy Ainger, Shirley Alexander, J.L. Anderson, Bill Armstrong, Charles Arokiasmy, Mary Avila, Nancy Barnes, Ann Barrier, Ed Barton, Brian Bauman, Craig Blodgett, Michael Blue, Phil Bohnsack, Arthur Borders, Jr., Orrin Bowman, Elizabeth Boyd, James Broome, Jr., Mariette Brotnov, Catherine Brown, Phyllis Brown, Sera Calderon, Cynthia

Calvert, Melanie Cammon, Jim Carlson, Larry Carmean, Judy Charbonneau, Jose Chaparro, Lori Clanton, Ron Claassen, Robert Cobb, Heather Compton, Helen Cooley, Rob Cords, Melissa Coronado, Wendy Costa, Lucy Croskey, Revie Cuevas, Linda Curtis,

Kristy Davis, Audrey Day, Marlene Deal, Ron Decker, Daniel Desantis, Diane Diestel, Barbara Dodds, Steve Frattalone, Vernet Friesen, Robert Fuchs, Pauline Fueller, John Fulan, Laura Fultz, Connie Garcia, Richard Gaston, Jay Griffith, Cristina Gutierrez, David Haskin, Will Haskins, Melissa Hergenroeder, Michelle Hill, Marybeth Hogan, Amy Holliday, John Holliday, Lejon Howard, Frank Hustedde, Rich Ingersoll, Beverly Jim, Suzanne Jost, Kariann Junio, Larry Kenkel, Fadra Kiehn, Debra Klein, Susan Kiewer, David Kuczler, Kathie Kuczler, Vivian Kunimitsu.

Norman Lane, Karen Latham, John Lawless, Julius Lockett, Ted Loewen, Kay Mathison, Angie Matthews, Janet Marshall, Laura McClintic, Kristin McLaughlin, James Merson, Laurie Mitchell, John Montejano, Willie Moore, Sally Moreno, Jasmine Mosiman-Purvis, Ma Moura, Simone Ostrander, August Padilla, Marcus Page, Stephanie Parmely, Kent Parr, Sean Peifer, Ron Perring, Shirley Peters, Carol Phillips, Janet Phillips, Angelita Pineda, Faith Porter, Carol Pryor, Ramiro Puento.

Tony Redfern, Audrey Redmond, Linda Richardson, Mayln Rose, Aimee Russell, Heather Scheid, Sylvia Schultz, Judy Shehadey, Jane Shoji, Jacqueline Sichon, Trevor Siemens, Tamara Soemali, Sara Steckling, Leroy Stevens, Gigi Stone, Nannette Stromberg, Charles Tavookjian, Cosmo Tedeschi, Vernon Thomas, Mered Thompson, Michael VanBuren, Chong Cho Vang, Eleanor Vargas, Melinda Vaughn, Jose Velasco, Jonathan Villalobos, Sarah Watters, Cecilia Weaver, James Wenger, Lucille Wheaton, Desdemonia Whittle, Karen Wiebe, Robyn Williams, Arthur Wint, and Maureen Wolf.

"Blessed are the Peacemakers."

## **Referrals were received primarily from criminal justice officials**

Most referrals were from Juvenile Probation as a diversion for non-violent first- and second-time offenders. Some adult and juvenile referrals were received from the courts on more serious cases. A few cases were referred by police. Occasionally we receive a self referral (either victim or offender), and these tend to be the most serious cases we receive. For example, I am currently working on a referral from a rape victim living in another state whose offender is incarcerated in California.

VORP received 533 cases in 1996. Special thanks to all of the criminal justice officials who made referrals or in some other way helped

us to do our job. VORP couldn't work without your support. We recognize the wealth of experience and wisdom among you. We appreciate your cooperation, advice, and counsel.

## **Financial contributors are essential partners**

Because of your generous giving, and using our small reserve from 1995, VORP income slightly exceeded expenses. This is a miracle, given how it looked at the beginning of December. Thank you! Without your support VORP would not exist in Fresno. The ongoing stability of VORP has been those individuals and churches who have so faithfully continued to contribute year after year and those who have joined more recently.

After taking out the City of Fresno one-time contribution, 1996 income was \$64,136 (up 15.6 percent from 1995); 6.0 percent from board members; 48.6 percent from individuals; 23.1 percent from churches; 8.2 percent from Mennonite Mutual Aid (matching Mennonite Churches' contributions in Fresno); 8.7 percent from fundraisers; and 5.4 percent from honorariums, training fees, etc.

As you may recall, VORP received a grant from the City of Fresno for the period from October 1995 through September 1996. This grant contributed \$33,750 in 1996. It was a one-time grant that helped us substantially improve our procedures, improve our support to volunteer mediators, increase our case load, and generally improve the quality of our service. On behalf of all of us at VORP, we thank the City of Fresno for this generous assistance.

Thanks also to College Community Church for office space, Pacific Printing for special printing assistance, David Janzen (he and Shannon have now moved to the Midwest, we will miss them) for bookkeeping, Oasis for preparing the newsletter for mailing, and David Kleschold for maintaining our computers.

## **The VORP Auxiliary**

The VORP Auxiliary benefited VORP through several fundraising projects. The "Enchanted Evening" with gourmet coffee, specialty desserts, silent auction, and raffle was a very special event designed to educate about and benefit VORP. Special Sponsors for the evening were the law firm of Bolen, Fransen, and Boostrom; Ron Decker of Decker Auto Supplies; and Margaret Hudson. Auxiliary members were Kay Mathison, Carol Fransen, Mary Avila, Linda Curtis, Lynn Baldwin, Carol Pryor, and Laura Fultz.

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# **VORP**

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