

## 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!

## *VORP is a community building process*

by Ron Claassen

VORP is a community building process. VORP is a character building process. VORP clarifies and strengthens community values. VORP is a peacemaking process. VORP helps create safer communities. VORP is a way of doing justice.

Trained VORP volunteers arrange and facilitate meetings which range from a minimum of 3 or 4 people (victim, offender and offender's parent or other responsible adult if juvenile offender) to 20 people (adding extended family, victim support, neighborhood and faith community representatives, and government representatives). We call this larger group process a Community Justice Conference (CJC). If all are willing, the VORP mediator leads the group in a justice and peacemaking process:

1. Recognize the injustices (tell/listen/

clarify/summarize the event its impact, offender accepts 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 all individuals in 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. Follow-up is essential because as agreements are kept, trust grows.

# 1998 Review

VORP, now starting its 17th 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.

## 42 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 Jay Griffith (291-1120).

VORP Sustaining Friend Churches in 1998 were:

Baptist Temple Church, Bethany Church, Bethel Temple Church, Butler Avenue Church, Campus Baptist Church, College Church of Christ, College Community Church - Mennonite Brethren, Downtown Church, Easton Southern Baptist Church, Faith United Methodist Church, First Congregational Church, First Mennonite Church - Reedley, First Presbyterian Church, Fresno Christian Reformed Church, Fresno Christian Fellowship Church, Friends Community Church, God's Family Church, Harmony Freewill Baptist Church, Iglesia De Dios, Memorial United Methodist Church, Mennonite Community Church, New Covenant Community Church, New Hope Community Church, New Life Fellowship, North Fresno Church, Northpark Community Church, Northwest Church, Our Lady

of Victory, 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, Wesley United Methodist Church and 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 (usually less than two years) volunteers. Although they are short term, they serve with energy and enthusiasm combined with high level skills and competency.

Beth McKee served an internship with VORP during the summer. She was here from Temple University in Philadelphia. She helped develop our work with the Bootcamp, the Elkhorn Correctional Facility.

David Underwood is currently working with us as an intern from California School of Professional Psychology. He is working with our bootcamp program, CJC program and providing help in coordination with the probation department.

Amy Detwiler ended a one-year voluntary service term with VORP in September. She was a full time volunteer with the Mennonite Voluntary Service program. Her primary responsibility was case management.

Victoria Buksbazen left after completing

her second year with VORP. She was also a full time volunteer with the Mennonite Voluntary Service program. Her primary responsibility was follow-up on the agreements.

Sara Rickard started a one to two year term of service with VORP in September. She is a volunteer with the Mennonite Voluntary Service Program. She is a graduate of the University of Iowa. In addition to mediation and numerous other office responsibilities, she has assumed primary responsibility for coordinating restitution and follow-up.

Maria Cockroft joined our staff in October. She is also a volunteer with the Mennonite Voluntary Service Program. She is a graduate of Fresno Pacific University and recently completed a Master's Degree program at George Mason University in Washington DC. In addition to mediation and other responsibilities, she has assumed primary responsibility for coordinating case management.

Jay Griffith is continuing his full time work with VORP. Jay is responsible for our CJC cases and has also assumed significant responsibility in working with our Sustaining Friend Churches.

VORP continued to contract with Fresno Pacific University's Center for Peacemaking and Conflict Studies for some leadership time. Elaine Enns (now in her ninth year with VORP), Duane Ruth Heffelbower (an attorney, formerly a VORP board member) and Ron Claassen (founding and continuing director) all work with VORP part time.

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## **VORP Board of Directors Assumes Both Financial and Policy Responsibility**

VORP is organized as a non-profit, public benefit corporation that 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.

Our Board of Directors are: Dave Kleshold, President; Michael Blue, Vice President; Carol Fransen, Secretary Treasurer; Mike Manghera, Leah Ann Alcazar, Arthur Wint, David Purvis 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 work constructively through what otherwise seems like a totally negative experience. 1998 VORP mediators were: Elsa Aguiniga, Bill Armstrong, Roxanne Baeza, Ed Barton, Kathy Bateson, Susan Bechara, John Bergey, Nancy Bionda, Barbara Birch, Michael Blue, Christine Bonnel, Heather Borders, Ginny Bradley, Shinda Brar, Darren Brassington, Catharine Maye Brown, David A. Brown, Victoria Buksbazen, Cynthia Calvert, Belen Camarillo, Sylvia Castro, Ron Claassen, Roxanne Claassen, Jeremy Clift, Maria Cockroft, Aaron Cook, Louis Cortez, Monique Cummings, Jinny Daily, Matthew David, Amy Detwiler, Sarah Egger, Wayne Elenke, Cindy Elgin, Mary Elizondo, Helen Ens, Elaine Enns, Ithaca Finds the Feather, Matthew Ford, Emily Foss, Wendell Foss, Yvonne Freve, Laura Fultz, Margarita Garcia, Richard Gaston, Jay Griffith, Lilia Guerrero, Susan High, Bill Hill, Julie Huckaby, Runisha Jackson, Beverly Jim, Ken Kaneversky, Kent Klassen, Susan Kliever,

Maria Knizevski, Sirivanh Kongboua Khay, John Lawless, Sharon Leerhoff, Willie Lewis, Steve Lincicum, Don Linscheid, Jerry Linscheid, Frances Lippman, Sylvia Lopez, Ana Lucatero, Sundeep Luna, Hrvoje Maglic, Elmer Martens, Helen McCarthey, Carlie McCorvey, Beth McKee, Dale McNeil, Laurie Mitchell, Lisa Montez, Elizabeth Morales, Dan Neufeld, Gladys Neufeld, Alma Nightingale, Doug Noll, Nathan Ogan, Sam OK Cindy Ontiveros, Ely Orrin, Mary Helen Ortega, Simone Ostrander, Stephanie Parmely, Maria Perez, Patty Pistorosi, Janet Phillips, Marie Prinz, Galen Quenzer, Tony Redfern, Eric Renshaw, Ellie Richards, Linda Richardson, Sara Rickard, David Ruff, Michael Russell, David Ryburn, Karen Ryburn, Maria Sandoval, Silvia Schultz, Ann Scott, Ron Sheppard, Tony Soza, Jaimy Stephens, Ed Stewart, Blanca Stransky, Darcy Takacs, Aaron Thompson, Alice Thurman, Wendy Turley, Robert VanCobb, Neng Vang, Heather Van Wagenen, Zimba Vasquez, Robert Volpp-Garcia, Lisa Villalobos, John Walker, Heather Walters, Don Warkentin, Toni Watkins, Lyle Willems, Becky Willems, Robyn Williams, Melissa, Wong, Trisha Woods, Pao Xiong, Vansan Xiong, Jill Yergensen.

"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 and for more serious offenses from the court as part of a sentence. Some adult referrals were received from the courts. A few case referrals were made by police. Occasionally we receive a self referral, either victim or offender and these tend to be the most serious cases we receive.

We also receive 6 non-violent felony referrals per month for Community Justice Conferences (CJC). The CJC develops a restorative justice sentence which is submitted to the court and is generally approved by the court as the sentence. The plan for these case referrals was developed by the probation department, the

public defender, the district attorney, the court, and VORP. These cases are paid for by the county on a per case basis.

474 referrals were received in 1998. Special thanks to Larry Price (Chief Probation Officer), Phil Erdman (Probation Restorative Justice Coordinator) and 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 donations, VORP income slightly exceeded expenses. 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. 1998 income was \$71,491, 6.1 from board members, 40.0 percent from individuals, 24.0 percent from churches, 25.2 percent from the county contract, 2.4 percent from corporate sponsors, 1.6 percent from training events, and 0.7 percent from fundraising, honorariums etc. On behalf of victims, offenders, and all others who benefit from this service/ministry, thanks to all of you for making Victim Offender Reconciliation a reality in Fresno County.

Thanks also to College Community Church for office space, Oasis for preparing the newsletter for mailing and David Kleshold for maintaining our computers.

## **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 April 23 & 24; and June 25 & 26.

Call VORP at 291-1120 for details.

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of the Central Valley, Inc.

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