

## Youth returns to a local school Hate. School returns to a local youth Hope.

Written by Jay Griffith. Mediated by Vicki Bandy & Bonnie Yantis.

Our mediation story this month reminds us that Hope can replace Hate in our community, so long as Peace and Goodwill are kept alive in our hearts. In fact, Restoring Hope is within the grasp of us all, each and every day of the year, if we wish.

Rebecca is 13. She once belonged to a local elementary school in her neighborhood. It's a place she describes as being where she "learned her ABC's," and a place where people showed her that they cared about her. However, Rebecca didn't show such kindness in return. For some hidden reason, only a year after she had left, she had given herself permission to return hate for love.

Her boyfriend, now in juvenile boot camp, had persuaded her to join him in going to her childhood school and severely vandalizing several classrooms. Many windows were broken, and various properties of the school, several teachers, and numerous students were tossed around and damaged. Still the school's Vice Principal, and one of its teachers, were willing to meet with Rebecca and her family to learn more about why this happened, and to see if things might somehow be restored, for all concerned.



The parties met. They took time to listen to one another about the harm and the hurt. They decided on a way to restore things, and for how look out for each other in the future. They did this all respectfully. The turning point in the meeting, however, was when Rebecca read her letter of apology. It was evident what the school and its people had once meant to her. You could see the Vice Principal nodding in agreement as she read it. They too remembered the little girl they had invested their love and gifts into to give her a more hopeful future. The mediation gave them both an opportunity to renew that promise. The Vice Principal stated that typically the school policy was to not allow such offenders back on campus, let alone do community service there. However, having so remembered the past in the way they did, they discovered a way to find a way through this mess for tomorrow. Besides the reading of the letter, Rebecca will write a reflection journal about her general thoughts and feelings about herself at the time of the offense and why she did it. She will also be serving the school at some special holiday events and with clean-up over the Christmas Break. No restitution was asked for, rather assurances of positive women mentors in her life for her schooling and personal life available at her new school. Everyone was very happy about the outcome.

Ask the parties if what they decided upon was just, and you wouldn't have to look at a signed piece of paper to know something significant happened. All you would have had to do was to see the faces of the people who had just made peace and shown goodwill towards one another.

\*\*\*\*\*

Peace and Goodwill. These ancient concepts contain the essence of the Christmas Dream. This dream is annually announced and reflected upon in our churches—"That God is with and for us!" They are also evident in our t.v. shows and news broadcasts, spreading the hope of peace and goodwill that can and does happen between people.

Each holiday season, we're compelled to ponder it anew. And it takes "faith" to dare to dream that our world, our local communities and our "neighbors" can still benefit from each of us putting into practice these very ancient ideas. What is even more wonderful to realize is that God extending his invitation to join Him in this very work!

We at VORP pray that you will join us in pondering anew the very tangible gifts of Peace and Goodwill that we can give this holiday season, and all year long.

**Have a very Merry Christmas  
and a Happy New Year!**

### BOARD MEMBERS

- Leah Ann Alcazar**  
President
- Michael Blue**  
Vice President
- Dave Purvis,**  
Interim Sec./Treasurer
- Joseph Avila**
- Joby Dupuis**
- Jay Griffith**  
Executive Director

### Welcome our Final Team 2000 Trainees!

Congratulations and Welcome to our recently trained Volunteer Mediators:

- David Akina,**
- Delores Amato,**
- Avelino Andrade,**
- Sengthiene Bosavanh,**
- Tricia Busby,**
- Valerie DiBudo,**
- Natalie Claussen,**
- Lisa Gibbons,**
- Lindsey Turner,**
- Diana Gains,**
- Sarah Hebblethwaite,**
- Elizabeth Jones,**
- Kari Konrad,**
- Cynthia Krizan,**
- Ajia Meux,**
- Matias Hernandez,**
- Juan Hernandez,**
- Mark Veenstra,**
- Shelby Palmer,**
- Mary Roberts,**
- Petra Smith,**
- Stacy Smith,**
- Eugene Trofimenko, &**
- Rebecca Wehmuller.**

We look forward to having you serve with us more in 2001!

## Save The Dates

**VORP's Upcoming  
Winter Volunteer  
Mediator Trainings**

### Ground Hog Weekend

**FEBRUARY 2 & 3**

Friday: 6:30pm—9:30pm

Saturday: 8:30am—3:30pm

### Pre-Spring Warm-Up

**MARCH 2 & 3**

Friday: 6:30pm—9:30pm

Saturday: 8:30am—3:30pm

**LEARN TO LOVE  
CONFLICT, AND  
LEARN TO VALUE & CARE  
FOR PEOPLE IN CONFLICT.**

The cost is \$20.00 for 9 hours of classroom training and 8 hours of field training as you work your first case. We only ask that you serve as a mediator on 2 additional cases sometime during your first year.

You too can make a difference in the lives of victims and offenders of juvenile crime in our community.

**Call the VORP office at 559-291-1120 and register today!**

### VORP Staff & Volunteers

#### Church & Community Volunteers—

Our VORP Mediators

Sengthiene Bosavanh—Mediation & Agreement Management

John Wiens—Finance/Office Management.

Jay Griffith—Director, Newsletter Publishing & Editing.

Dulco Printing and Oasis (Older Adult Social Services)—Newsletter Printing & Preparation

**FRESNO**

# VORP

2529 Willow Avenue  
Clovis, CA 93612  
(559) 291-1120

## REQUEST AN LRG PURCHASE DISCOUNT CARD AND HELP VORP THROUGHOUT 2001 !!!

Receive local purchases at discounted rates, and leverage your purchasing power to help your peacemaking partner, VORP.

**VORP is inviting you to consider purchasing an LRG discount card this holiday season, and LRG will designate your future purchases to further benefit the VORP program.**

For \$15.00 you can buy a discount vendor card. \$5.00 will go to VORP. In addition, each purchase you make at local businesses will see you receiving a discount on these purchases. As well, VORP will receive so many cents on the dollar with your purchases.

**Consider helping VORP throughout the year in this way. Call and sign up today!**

## A Special Thank You To Our Year 2000 Donors and Volunteers !

We will finish the year having received 250 referrals from Probation. 50% of these families will respond to mediated justice instead of requesting only further court intervention or not caring at all.

You've prayed for those we've served, and for our staff and its mediators; you've allowed us to hold meditations in your churches, you've given of your time and talents to mediate, and you've given generously with your financial gifts. Because of this, these "neighbors" tangibly know that both God and people in their community care about what has happened to them, and what will happen to them in the future, despite the hurt and harm of juvenile crime.

Thank you for investing in a program which seeks to let people decide what "they" most need to restore one another after the shock of a crime, and make for greater peace and goodwill in our County.

We look forward to you joining us again next year with your prayers and encouraging support!

**Non-Profit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
P A I D  
Clovis, CA 93612  
Permit #376**