

# VORP NEWS

A Monthly Newsletter of the Victim Offender Recon-

## “Bittersweet Candy, Sweet Peace”

I thought taking a case of candy stealing fifth graders would be a breeze. I thought wrong. What I found was that God was showing me there’s a lot I still had to learn about working with children.

I met with the first offender, Jacob, at his home, attended by both his parents. Jacob said he took the money, but the girls talked him into it. His parents felt strongly that Jacob was coaxed by the girls, but that he should pay his part in this.

I met with Maria and her mother. She was a very intelligent little girl who had a story far different from Jacob. She blamed Jacob for the entire incident. She did tell me, however, that she was willing to work to pay back the school for her part in what happened.

Finally, I met Monica. Of course, she had a story too! Monica’s mother sat crying as she listened to her daughter tell her involvement in the offense. Monica said she felt she had dishonored her teacher and her mother by what she had done.

The victim, the Principle of a local Fresno elementary school, was very willing to talk to the children and their families.

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Mr. Contreras, the Vice Principal, and I met with the three youth and their parents. The ground rules were laid out with a positive tone, especially how important it would be to tell the truth.

Each of these youth told their

*by Hanna Starkweather,  
VORP Volunteer Mediator*

stories of stealing and concealing stolen candy from the “Snack Shack” at their school. And each of their stories, just like the first time, were entirely different.

Mr. Contreras and I requested them to re-tell their stories, this time taking responsibility for their specific part in the offense. Mr. Contreras made sure each of the kids understood what “truth” and “responsibility” meant.



The truth came out that Jacob was the leader in stealing the money. His mother was in shock.

Then Monica told how she and Jacob had made Maria out to be the person who was the leader. Finally, Maria shared her story again. This time the stories matched.

Mr. Contreras told the kids just what kind of impact this had on the school. The missing candy cost \$128.00. The “Snack Shack” had to be closed down for the rest of the school year. And, without these proceeds, there would be no monies to go towards student fees for sixth (6th) grade camp. Their faces saddened as they realized they had just ruined their own chances for going to camp.

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### Board Members

- Jay Griffith—Exec. Director
- Leah Ann Alcazar—President
- Michael Blue—Vice President
- Carol Fransen—Sec./Treasurer
- Joseph Avila
- Joby Dupuis
- Dave Purvis

Regarding the future, Mr. Contreras expressed how he’d like to see each of these young people succeed in life. He talked with each of them in a personal way. They were very open to his hopes and ideas for them. They were eager to repay the school for what they did.

Each would agree to work an hour-a-day with the custodian, after-school, for a total of 30 hours. At the end of the mediation, Jacob’s mother apologized to the girls and their mothers for blaming them for all of this.

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My eyes were opened to see that some situations need a willing heart and an open mind to “find” peace. God helped me to see that I didn’t need to know all the facts. By respecting and caring for people the truth came out, and the people made peace.

Thank you, Hanna. Blessed are the Peacemakers!

## Thank You Albertsons! Thank you Save-Mart!

With the help of Hanna Starkweather, VORP has been tremendously blessed by Albertsons and Save-Mart Supermarkets.

Through Hanna, these grocery stores heard about our ministry/service to the community.

Now, through their generosity, all VORP’s Fall 2000 & 2001 Mediator Trainees will be well-fed and cared for at our trainings!

## Save The Dates

**Our Last Fall Training Is On:**

**Nov. 10th & 11th**

**Friday: 6:30 PM—9:30 PM**

**Saturday: 8:30 AM—3:30 PM**

Learn to be a volunteer peacemaker/mediator. The cost is \$20 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 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  
to register today!

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## 2001 Training Dates

To be Announced  
In January Newsletter

## Congratulations to Our Newly Trained Volunteer Mediators!

VORP welcomes a new group of talented people, from our October 2000 Training, to the team of VORP mediators serving victims and offenders of juvenile crime in our community:

Elizabeth Capps	Anna Marty
Leticia Chavez	Keri Miller
Dan Bigler	Rebecca Rahe
Janice Fortney	Teri Sanchez
Dravin Godwin	Veronica Swanigan
Vickie Haas	Jodi Van Dyk
Helen Khala	Kelly Wade
Evelyn Landaverde	Joyce Wafford
Paul Loewen	Marina Young
Gabriela Martinez	

## A TIME TO HONOR OUR FOUNDER, Ron Claassen

On March 16th, 2001, VORP will be having a Formal Banquet to honor our founder, and former Director, Ron Claassen.

Ron's efforts to promote the welfare of victims and offenders, and give them a way to restore one another when crimes happen, has made a deep and lasting impression on many people and institutions in Fresno County, our country and abroad.

We invite you to join us in celebrating this time with him.

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See our January newsletter to RSVP us for a table or a seat at the Banquet.

## *A New Face To Meet!*

*Please Welcome  
Sengthiene Bosavanh  
to the VORP Staff.*

*Sengthiene was born in Vientiane, Laos. She and her family moved to Missouri in the U.S. in 1980 while she was still a young girl.*

*A year later they would move to Oakland, California to be with more family and friends they knew from back home in Laos. After a short time, however, they needed to move again, this time to Fresno.*

*Sengthiene would graduate with top honors at Fresno High School. This enabled her to earn a full scholarship to USC. She graduated from there in 1998 holding a Psych degree, with an emphasis in Natural Science & Gerontology.*

*Her heart was still for Fresno, and in helping her native people in America. She became involved with Leadership Education for Asian Pacifics. And now, to further help the community, she is seeking to complete her Masters in Organizational Behavior from Alliant University in Fresno.*

*We are very fortunate to have Sengthiene employed with us. She has been serving as our Mediation & Agreement Manager since mid-September. She's wonderful person to work with. Please welcome her.*

### Volunteers, Staff Support & Staff

- \* Our VORP Volunteer Community Mediators
- \* Oasis (Older Adult Social Services) — Newsletter Preparation
- \* Jay Griffith, Leah Ann Alcazar — Newsletter Publishing/Editing
- \* John Wiens — Finance/Office Manager
- \* Case & Agreement Management — Seng Bosavanh

**FRESNO**

[www.vorp.org](http://www.vorp.org)

## VORP NEWS

A Monthly Newsletter of the Victim Offender Reconciliation Program

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