



Victim Offender Reconciliation Program (VORP) of Denver

430 West 9th Avenue, Denver, CO 80206 cm@vorpofdenver.org 303.534.6167

NEWSLETTER

Spring 2007

Thanks to...

***So many who have given so much
for so long to VORP of Denver.***

Where to start?

- To the First Mennonite Church of Denver for providing office and meeting space for VORP since 1993. We are ever grateful for your steady support and continued belief in what we do. VORP Board member Ardell Swartzendruber is a member of FMC and is our link to the church members. FMC also puts on an annual entertainment fundraiser for VORP. And it is entertaining! (see announcement)
- To the Adolph Coors Foundation, Anschutz Family Foundation, Capitol Hill United Ministry, Park Hill Congregational Church, JBAG, and the generous individuals who contributed to VORP at the Blues Brethren Concert held at First Mennonite in November 2006 for the benefit of VORP
- To Wayne and Miriam Roth for their heartening monthly contribution to VORP
- To RESTORE of Fort Collins for providing us with the inspiration, training, and documentation to begin RESTORE in Denver
- To Rose Herrera, for volunteering her time, in addition to her Program Manager position. Rose's middle name should be RESTORE. She loves the program and has been committed to it since we first heard its name and purpose

- To Danny Sandoval, Lead Retail Investigator at King Soopers, and Mark Roggeman, Community Resource Officer for DPD District 4, for being on the RESTORE panel monthly as community reps
- To Honorable Herbert Galchinsky, Denver County Court, for his faith in the RESTORE diversion program
- To Danielle Dyvig from Denver Probation and Calvin McGee from Safe City for appearing on the RESTORE panel
- To Barb Larsen, Daniel Horsey, Marge Lentz, and Lucilla Tenorio, regular volunteer facilitators for RESTORE



Danny Sandoval, left, Lead Retail Investigator at King Soopers, presents Norm Dewhurst, Chair of VORP Board, and Rose Herrera, Program Manager, with a letter describing his experience as merchant representative on the RESTORE panel and his support of the RESTORE program.

RESTORE of Denver

What is RESTORE?

RESTORE is a Restorative Justice diversion program for juvenile shoplifters between ages 10 and 18, who are referred to VORP from Denver County Court, Safe City, and Denver Probation. The offenders attend two sessions, one lasting a Saturday morning, and the second a half hour.

Part 1 of the Saturday morning session consists of a panel that informs about the impact of shoplifting from the people's perspectives:

- judicial department representative
- loss prevention representative from a store
- community representative
- police officer
- parent of a past offender
- past juvenile offender

The panel and offenders then break into dialogue circles for Part 2. The attention is then on the offenders and their stories of shoplifting, how it has affected them and their families. Everyone in the circle, including the parents, have time to speak. You would have to be in the room to appreciate the impact these stories have on the families, some who may not have talked about the shoplifting event together until that day, some who have taken it as an opportunity to bring their families closer together through support and requiring their child to work off fees and fines. Participants are touched by the powerful energy that is raised.

The circle then turns to the strengths of the offenders and how community service, using their talents, can produce a positive ripple effect, just as their shoplifting experience has created a negative effect.

After the circles, in Part 3, each youth sits down with a VORP volunteer and their parents to make a contract for a variety of projects that will repair the harm to the community, themselves, and their family.

After 1 or 2 months, the youth returns for a Council meeting to show how they've completed their contract. At that point, they are given a certificate of completion and have completed the RESTORE process. For most of them, the offense is off their record.

VORP thanks Perrie McMillen, Bernadette Martinez Felix, and the volunteers at RESTORE of Fort Collins. They have been most generous with their time and sharing of their brainchild. The recidivism rates for shoplifting in Fort Collins have been reduced to 2%. That is remarkable, especially when one realizes that shoplifting is a "gateway" crime. It's impossible to track where the other 98% may have gone with their lives, but for every one who stayed out of jail, we are pleased for them and their families, and for the Colorado budget that saves \$30,000 per year for each one who may otherwise have gone to jail. And now we will be doing the same in Denver.

Comments from participants referred to RESTORE, on what they found most useful about the program:

- It helped me understand what I did was wrong
- When everyone gathered together to talk about their experience
- The program helped me know that there are still people who care
- Small groups were great
- The effect (shoplifting) has on so many people
- Listening to the younger panel people
- (Parent) Having the youth think about what they did over and over again
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Two of our shoplifter participants have returned, more often than required, to be part of the panel that presents to new referrals from Court. We appreciate their continuing interest in our program.

You are invited to observe the RESTORE program. Come by VORP the third Saturday of every month at 8:30 a.m.



Calvin McGee, Safe City Diversion Officer, speaks to the audience at the February RESTORE Meeting.

From these sessions, we have surfaced a need for a program started by VORP in the past – the Parent/Teen Dialogue program.

*As mentioned in the RESTORE article, some families have talked little if at all about the shoplifting event with their child prior to coming to the session, a clear indication that communication within the family is lacking. By the second half of 2007, VORP plans on resurrecting the **Parent/Teen Dialogue program**, calling on volunteers who have been trained in the past and offering a new training program for the future. Watch for this coming announcement of training.*



SAVE THE DATE !

This may be as early a notice you will ever receive of a not-to-be-missed future event. Every year the First Mennonite Church of Denver and Pastor Vern Remple put on a fundraising event for the benefit of VORP of Denver. This year the date is:

November 17, 2007

First Mennonite Church
430 West 9th Avenue
Denver, CO 80204

Watch for future details!

Instrumentals and song by multi-generation First Mennonite Members



HELP WANTED

**TRAINED
RESTORATIVE JUSTICE
MEDIATORS**
to serve as
Facilitators
at
RESTORE sessions

**RESTORE PROGRAM
TRAINING PROVIDED**
By VORP

Call ROSE at 303.534.6167

Parent/Teen Dialogue Program

After each RESTORE session, all the volunteers stay to debrief what happened in the circles and contract phases, reviewing what we do, and making a list of how to fine-tune the program in the future.

In addition to the monthly board meetings, VORP board members are regularly performing organizational and financial responsibilities, as well as participating in fundraising events and program sessions. This is, indeed, a "working" board. Board members are:

Norm Dewhurst, Chair
David Henninger
Ardell Swartzendruber
Harold Fields, Treasurer
Eileen Charles Hyatt, Secretary
Kate Goodspeed
Our next new board member – Maybe you?

At the January Board meeting, Eileen Hyatt was appointed to act as Executive Director of VORP for a period of time covered by a grant from the Juvenile Accountability Board Grant.

Eileen and Rose comment on their roles below.

Director's Report **(Eileen Charles Hyatt)**

Since 2004, the board and staff of VORP have expected that the RESTORE program as we viewed it in Fort Collins was a natural fit for the mission of VORP of Denver. Now we know it is true and more has been explained about that in other articles in this newsletter.

Fundraising is always a challenge. In the fall of 2004, as member of the board of VORP, I started a Fundraising Committee with members Stephanie Phibbs, Heather McGillivray, and Cheryl August. Stephanie, Heather, and Cheryl are the experienced people in the field of fundraising. They laid the foundation by writing a sophisticated grant for Tony Grampsas Youth Services funds.

While VORP was not the recipient of the Tony Grampsas grant, the grant materials themselves became the basis for grant applications to follow. The results were discouraging for a while, until the RESTORE program got on its way, and the community recognized its value. VORP has now received three grants for 2006-2007.

Currently I have undertaken a more expanded role as grant writer. I am also working with Rose in further organizing RESTORE and putting evaluation tools in place so the RESTORE program may continue to draw community support for years to come.

Program Manager's Report **(Rose Herrera)**

I have been with VORP since 2001. I would first like to thank the board for supporting me through the rough times when I was the only one in the office.

With regard to the RESTORE program, I receive referrals from the Court, begin individual case files, contact the referred shoplifter and send them a letter explaining the program. Between then and the date of Session 1, there are many phone calls to each of the youth and/or their families.

I line up the community representatives to be on the panel each month, as well as volunteers from VORP to facilitate the dialogue sessions.

We keep records on all demographics and data, which I enter on a chart. You know how it goes, lots of details.

Every referred youth has to return to prove to VORP through me that they have completed their contract.

I do love RESTORE. It is awesome to see the kids respond to our program. I believe our program makes a difference in the lives of the young shoplifters as well as their parents.

If you are able, please consider a contribution to VORP and RESTORE. Send it today to:

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