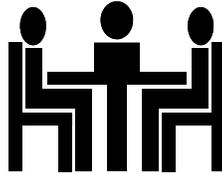


STAFF

Alice Price - Exec. Director
Paula Medina - Program Manager
Erin Kenzie—School Programs Coord.
Renee Mackey—Parent/Teen Coord.
Claire McArdle—MVS Volunteer

San Luis Valley



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Victim-Offender Reconciliation Program

soon to be the Center for Restorative Programs

PO Box 1775, Alamosa, CO 81101 (719) 589-5255 slvorp@amigo.net www.slvorp.org

Fall/Winter 2007 Newsletter

Program Philosophy

SLV-VORP brings young offenders, victims and the community together to search for reconciliation and solutions to “make things right.” We also serve 1) Schools & after-school sites—facilitation, training and systems development around conflict resolution, peer mediation, restorative discipline and bullying prevention; 2) Families—Parent-Teen Mediation.

VORP Updates Agency Name

After serving the Valley for over twelve years as the San Luis Valley Victim-Offender Reconciliation Program, we are updating our name to the **Center for Restorative Programs**. After several rounds of board and staff discussion, the board voted at this year’s annual retreat to move ahead with a name change.

The previous name, despite its rich history, is no longer sufficiently descriptive of the range of programs that the organization now offers. When San Luis Valley VORP incorporated in 1995, the only service offered was the victim-offender reconciliation program. Over the years, the organization has added additional services for youth-in-conflict, in response to community needs. While the VORP program continues to serve as the backbone of the organization’s mission—to create restorative justice options in the San Luis Valley—the board and staff have created a name that expresses more completely and concisely what VORP

offers. The new name will also provide an umbrella for continued program development and growth.

Center for Restorative Programs will encompass the victim-offender reconciliation program, parent-teen mediation, and an array of restorative-based training and intervention services for schools and after-school sites. The name change will take effect in early 2008 along with the introduction of a new website at www.restorativeprograms.org.

Mediation Training: Save the date

VORP will offer a 2-day core mediation training on Feb. 1-2, 2008. Participants who take the training and wish to volunteer with VORP will be eligible to complete additional modules on victim-offender mediation and parent-teen mediation later that month. Call 719-589-5255 or e-mail slvorp@amigo.net for registration information.

Peer Mediation Trainings

During October, VORP staff kept busy planning and conducting peer mediation trainings. They hosted three all-day trainings at the Sacred Heart Parish fireplace room, for peer mediation teams from seven Valley high schools and one middle school. Nearly 100 students participated in the trainings, in which they learned various skills and techniques important for mediators. They also role played in-school situations appropriate for peer mediation. Participating schools included Creede High School, Sangre de Cristo High School, Center High School, Moffat High School, Sanford High School, Centauri High School, Centennial High School and Ortega Middle School. We were especially happy to welcome the Sangre team, who are initiating a new peer mediation program in their district this Fall.

☯ *“If crime is a wound, justice should be about healing.” - Dan Van Ness* ☯

School Climate Symposium a Success



Barbara Coloroso speaks about “The Bully, the Bullied and the Bystander”.

Coloroso’s speech kicked off a two-day School Climate Symposium for Valley school district leadership teams. Local, state, and national experts presented on several issues affecting school climate, including school prevention programming, GLBTQ issues, relationship violence, sexual harassment, sports culture, social and emotional learning, and immigrant issues. Approximately 60 superintendents,

VORP partnered with the Boys & Girls Clubs of the San Luis Valley and Tu Casa to invite Barbara Coloroso, a bullying prevention expert, to speak on September 20th at Adams State College. Coloroso is an internationally-recognized speaker and author in the areas of parenting, teaching, school discipline, non-violent conflict resolution and reconciliatory justice.

Approximately 200 community members including youth,

families, and school staff from throughout the Valley attended the event. The evening featured a reception and book-signing before and after Coloroso’s talk. In her hour-long keynote, entitled “The Bully, the Bullied, and the Bystander,” Coloroso spoke in-depth about bullying, as well as addressing broader parenting and schooling practices.



Valley school administrators enjoy Coloroso’s speech.

principals, and other school staff from nine area districts, along with key community leaders, attended the symposium. The goal of the symposium was to raise awareness about school climate concerns and offer ideas and best practices for addressing these challenges in San Luis Valley schools. VORP, along with its partner agencies, will be conducting follow-up consultations with the attending schools to address their individual needs. The three days of events were underwritten by The Colorado Trust, The Gay and Lesbian Fund for Colorado, and Adams State College.

Parent-Teen Conflicts?

VORP offers free Parent-Teen Mediation services to families experiencing the normal range of adolescent conflict. Referrals are accepted from youth- and family-serving agencies. Families may also inquire directly about these services to our Parent-Teen Coordinator, Renée Mackey, at (719) 589-5255.

Take a Chance on Year-end Giving!

We always appreciate those who remember VORP annually with a year-end, tax-deductible gift. This year, we are offering yet another chance to give. We will be selling raffle tickets mid-November to mid-December. Take a chance to win: 1) a Memorial Day weekend get-away on the Rio Grande; 2) 4 rounds of golf at the Rio Grande Club; or 3) a photograph by local artist David Guerrero. Please help out by purchasing and selling tickets. Contact any board member or call 589-5255 for details. The drawing will take place at our holiday open house, December 13th at 5:30 pm at Sacred Heart Parish.

VORP Shorts

School Partnerships

VORP is working closely with administrators and staff at some area schools to use mediation and restorative discipline as tools for early intervention in problematic youth behaviors. The goal is to work through issues before law enforcement or the courts become involved. In instances of bullying, the Olweus Bullying Prevention model is used. This tool does not utilize face-to-face mediation, due to the power imbalance inherent in bullying.

This collaboration may also extend into area courts. If school-site incidents are charged into court prior to a VORP referral, we often serve as a diversion or sentencing option for municipal court or the Juvenile Magistrate. If youth can resolve issues through teen-on-teen mediation or victim-offender dialogue, charges may be dismissed or deferred, so long as there is compliance with the terms of agreement. By being accountable for their actions and talking through relationship conflicts, youth are less likely to re-offend or move further into the justice system.

They also learn life-long skills for positive problem-solving and conflict resolution.

We look forward to continuing and expanding this collaborative work with area schools in the year ahead.

VORP Welcomes New Staff

This September, VORP welcomed a new staff member to the team. Claire McArdle is serving for one year with VORP through Mennonite Voluntary Service (MVS). She has kept busy in her first two months helping with the School Climate Symposium, organizing peer mediation trainings, and doing co-mediations. She is excited to be involved in all aspects of VORP's work and also enjoys her time living in La Jara with five other MVS volunteers.



New staff member Claire McArdle with staff member Erin Kenzie at the Symposium.

UPCOMING EVENTS

All are welcome at this year's Holiday Open House coming up on **December 13, 2007**. See the back page of this newsletter for details. Don't forget to buy your raffle tickets, enjoy the good food and fellowship until the party's end, and find out if you are one of the lucky winners!

Mark your calendars! VORP will be hosting Mediation Training **February 1- 2, 2008**. Please contact Paula Medina at 719-589-5255 or slvvorp@amigo.net for more information.

HOLIDAY OPEN HOUSE

SLV Victim-Offender Reconciliation Program (SLV-VORP)

Raffle drawing at 5:30 p.m.!

December 13th, 2007

3:30—5:30 p.m.

Sacred Heart Church (Fireplace Room)

709 4th Street

Alamosa, CO

