

Dialogue with Offenders Produces Potential Value to Victims

Interview with Marlene Young, Executive Director of
National Organization for Victim Assistance

Interview by Phyllis Turner-Lawrence

Q: From a victim advocacy point of view, how do you feel victim offender dialogue/conferencing processes and the restorative justice movement have evolved?

A: I think we've come a long way in the sense that many more victim advocates are interested in restorative justice and I think that a lot of victims are also. Yet, there is still a big hesitancy about it. The barrier to victims getting involved is their perspective that people who are working on restorative justice are promoting offender issues or are more supportive of the offender. I say that without that being my frame of mind, but I certainly hear that in the field.

I believe that bringing offenders together with victims is not therapy, but can be of a major

In 1975, after receiving her doctorate and law degree, Marlene Young became the research director at the Multnomah County (Portland, Oregon) Sheriff's department, where her research on crime against the elderly became in part an early victim assistance program. In the same year, she banded together with other pioneers in the field to form the National Organization for Victim Assistance (NOVA), where she has served as President (1979-81) and Executive Director (1981 to the present).

Phyllis Turner Lawrence, J.D., presently Prince William County Restorative Justice Program Coordinator, was the Special Projects Coordinator for NOVA for 3 years and is a graduate of the training for trainers programs of both NOVA's Community Crisis Response Team Training Institute and the NIC/BARJ Restorative Justice Academy.

therapeutic benefit for victims. A key point of the restorative dialogue process is for the victims to make clear what they lost from this event, on all levels – emotionally, physically, financially, etc. It gives them a chance to find out why an offender did something or at least the offender's viewpoint on that, so it fills out part of the story, as the victims are trying to put it together in their minds. When victims are able to put their own story together, they are able to exert more power over the experience. This is a part of the process of reconstructing their lives.

Victim offender dialogue/conferencing has to be done with trained facilitators. There's no doubt about that because it's too dangerous for both victims and offenders to get into a dialogue without somebody or some people who know how to help them talk. That would be a worry, but I don't think it's a longtime barrier.

I think victim offender dialogue/conferencing does help victims, and I think it does help offenders. It seems to be a completion of the circle of constructing where do you go from here.

Q: How do you think victim offender dialogue/conferencing might help offenders?

A: I think that particularly for juvenile offenders, they can see the impact on the victims when they have to listen to the victim's side of the story. I think adult offenders too can learn from that. Anecdotes from so-called "victim impact" classes held in prisons suggest that for some inmate participants, the process arouses a sense of empathy they hadn't experienced before. The same is said about offenders involved in restorative justice programs – and that's all for the good.

See Interview on page 10

Virtual VOMA On-line

This issue of VOMA Connections explores Restorative Justice and VOM on the world wide web. For a listing of relevant RJ/VOM web sites, please see pages 6 & 7.

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VOMA Connections

VOMA Connections is published by the International Victim Offender Mediation Association. VOMA's mission is:

"To provide inspiration, leadership and information-sharing in the development and support of various models of justice which create opportunities for dialogue between victims, offenders, and their communities for the purpose of healing and restoration."

VOMA welcomes contributions, including short articles, literature reviews, case studies, program news and other interesting info. Photos and graphics are also welcome. Views expressed within the VOMA Connections are those of the authors and not necessarily those of VOMA.

Send submissions to co-editors Beverly Moore or Ann Warner Roberts (See Board of Directors listing at right for contact information).

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Publishing Schedule for VOMA Connections

Issue	Submissions Deadline
#8 Winter 2000	October 1
#9 Spring 2001	January 1
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#11 Autumn 2001	July 1

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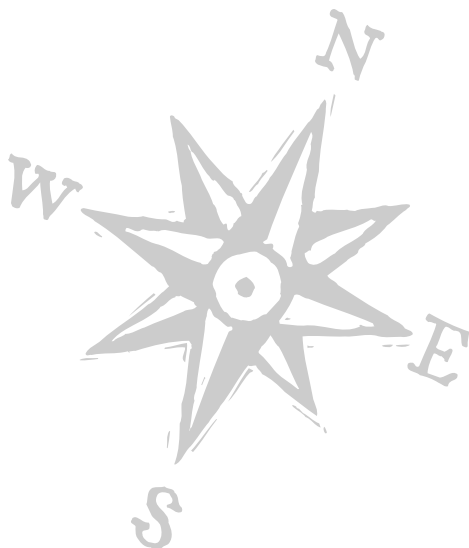
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VOMA by Region

VOMA has developed regional networks to better serve its members. Following is the United States, Canada and the world divided into seven Regions. After each Board member's name in the Directory on the preceding page, the assigned Region is listed. For information on issues of interest to VOMA members, please contact one of your Regional Board Representatives.

Region I

Saskatchewan, Manitoba, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, and Minnesota

Region II

Wisconsin, Iowa, Missouri, Illinois, Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, West Virginia, Kentucky, and Tennessee

Region III

Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, and Washington, D.C.

Region IV

Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Florida

Region V

Arkansas, Louisiana, Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, Colorado, New Mexico, and Arizona

Region VI

California, Nevada, Utah, Wyoming, Idaho, Oregon, Montana, Washington, Alaska, Hawaii, Alberta, and British Columbia

Region VII

Newfoundland,
International Members



Welcome to New Members

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- ◇ Jon Singer, Lancaster Area VORP, PA
- ◇ Marc Gascho Rempel, Benton County Juvenile Department, OR
- ◇ Cristine Corbett, Pittsburgh Mediation Ctr., PA
- ◇ Rhonda Booby, Restorative Justice Unit, NSW Dept. of Corrective Services, Australia
- ◇ Mauna Liddiard, Criminal Justice Srv. ACEC, UT
- ◇ Jessica Eller, Mediation Services of Tippecanoe County, IN
- ◇ Martin Miser, Dakota County Community Corrections, MN

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- ◇ Giselle Dias, Rittenhouse: A New Vision, Ontario, Canada
- ◇ Eric Gilman, Clark County Restorative Justice Project, WA
- ◇ Jennifer Poole, Ada County Juvenile Court Services, ID
- ◇ Jim Vik, Minnesota Dept. of Corrections, MN
- ◇ Julie Angeles, MN Department of Corrections - MCF-Shakopee, MN
- ◇ Kenneth Webster, Webster Consultancy and Training, England
- ◇ Harriette Manis, Amherst H. Wilder Foundation: Excel Program, MN
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- ◇ Mark Hall, Stearns County Community Corrections, MN
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- ◇ Kelli Groves, Hands of Hope Resource Center, MN
- ◇ Brigid Kennedy, Milwaukee D.A, V/O Conferencing Project, WI

- ◇ Cissy Stamm, NY
- ◇ Peter G. Anderheggen, CT
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- ◇ John Johns, Restorative Justice Ministry of IA
- ◇ Judith Lake, Mediation and Restorative Justice Center, Alberta, Canada
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- ◇ Mel Lofty, Thames Valley Police, Oxon, England
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- ◇ Harley Eagle, Mennonite Central Committee, Oglala Nation Unit, SD
- ◇ Sarah D. Lewandowski, Department of Corrections, MN
- ◇ Rose Olmsted, Freeborn County Crime Victim Crisis Center, MN
- ◇ Christel Boeck, Arizona Regional Community Policing Institute, AZ

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- ◇ Charlotte King, Benedict Center, WI
- ◇ Carol Pulskamp, California State University, Sacramento, CA
- ◇ Jamie Williams, MN
- ◇ Judith Thompson, The Union Institute, MA
- ◇ Stephen Planson, Restorative Justice Resource Group, NC

The Co-Chair Corner

*by Kathy Elton and David Doerfler
Board Co-Chairs*

This has been a busy and productive year for VOMA. This past summer, the Board worked hard preparing for the September strategic planning session to be conducted prior to the Annual Training Institute and Conference in Minnesota. Along with the written surveys sent to our membership and VOM practitioners who are not members, Board members telephone-interviewed dozens of stakeholders in the field of Restorative Justice.

At the Conference, we hope to update everyone on VOMA's strategic plan at the membership meeting on Saturday, September 16, 2000. If you are unable to attend the Conference this year, the strategic plan will be shared in future VOMA Connections and mailings to members.

The results of the VOMA Board elections are in and we would like to congratulate and welcome aboard two new members: Jane Riese from York, Pennsylvania, and Shadell Permanand from Toronto, Ontario. We also had three of our current Board members re-elected: Walter "Drew" Smith from Trenton, New Jersey; Jan Bellard from Wentworth, North Carolina; and Bruce Kittle from Mt. Union, Iowa. These five will serve three-year terms with the VOMA Board.

We also will be bidding farewell to two Board members. Carolyn McLeod, from Stillwater, Minnesota, is a long-standing Board member whose name has become a mainstay in the victim offender community. The Board would like to acknowledge and thank Carolyn for her devoted service and dedication to the VOMA Board for the past six years. Things will not be the same without her!

Also, the Board will miss Bobbie Boland, from Torbay, Newfoundland, Canada. Bobbie was only on the Board for a short time, but her input into the

mid-year Board meeting and strategic planning session was deeply valued and appreciated. Bobbie's balanced and gentle presence gave grounding to many long meetings, and the VOMA Board will miss her greatly. Thank you Bobbie.

We hope to see many of you at the conference in Minnetonka, Minnesota, from September 12-16, 2000. The atmosphere and energy at VOMA conferences is one in which building a community is important and encouraged. It is a time for new ideas, new friends, and new insights. As members of the Board, we look forward to this time of year. We feel the Annual Conference is the "crown jewel" of VOMA. If you cannot attend this year, please start making plans to join us next year for VOMA 2001.



Video Provides Excellent Overview of School Based Restorative Justice

"Making Things Right: Restorative Justice for School Communities," is a video and guidebook now available through the Colorado School Mediation Project. The video provides an overview of the principle and practices of RJ in school settings throughout the United States, and includes interviews with teachers, administrators, parents and student who have all been impacted by RJ processes.

To order the \$35.00 video and guidebook contact:

Colorado School Mediation Project
2885 Aurora Avenue Suite 13
Boulder, CO 80303
tel: 303/444-7671 fax: 303/444-7247

New Report Recommends RJ Initiatives and Approaches as Effective Strategies to Reduce Crime

A groundbreaking new report reveals that current "get tough" approaches ("trying youthful offenders in adult courts" or sentencing youths to "adult time for "adult crime") do not reduce juvenile crime. The report shows that although there is sufficient knowledge to substantially reduce youth crime and violence without a substantial increase in spending, reforms that can solve the problem are not being widely used. The report recommends restorative justice initiatives and approaches as effective prevention and intervention strategies.

"Less Hype, More Help: Reducing Juvenile Crime, What Works -- and What Doesn't," is a report by Richard Mendel,

supported by the Walter S. Johnson Foundation. The report was released by the American Youth Policy Forum in partnership with a broad coalition including the National Urban League, the Child Welfare League of America, The National Crime Prevention Council, the Coalition for Juvenile Justice and the National League of Cities. For more information on the report contact:

Richard Mendel
tel: 410/547-1663
or
Samual Halperin
tel: 202/775-9731

On Line with "Virtual" VOMA

Communication and Networking Strategy to Increase RJ/VOM Internet Use

By Beverly Moore

This past year, VOMA has been working on developing strategic goals to guide the future of the Association. One of the proposed Goals is "To fully develop 'virtual VOMA' as a restorative justice leader on the World Wide Web."

With that strategic goal in mind, VOMA Connections decided to search the World Wide Web in order to discover how much RJ/VOM information is currently available. The results of that search are presented on page 6 & 7. It is hoped that this list will serve as a resource for people interested in exploring the topic of restorative justice on the Internet.

This list is not intended to represent all of the web pages that contain restorative justice information. Instead, it is hoped that it will serve as a foundation for those looking for RJ/VOM info on the Internet.

Included in the listings are resource directories, videos, publications, articles, training models and manuals, and discussion papers. There are pages dedicated to RJ/VOM policy development, while other sites are program pages with agency brochures, staff biographies and training calendars. Some of the sites listed only have a few pages of RJ/VOM info available. Others are dedicated solely to RJ/VOM. Many contain links to other important RJ sites.

VOMA's web page has recently revised its list of links to other restorative justice sites to include this Directory. If you know of other web pages that

Beverly Moore is Publications Director for VOMA and a VOMA Board member. She is also Program Manager of a victim/offender mediation program in Lane County, Oregon.

Join VOMA On-line with Web page and Listserve

VOMA has two different ways members can electronically communicate and acquire information using e-mail and the Internet:

1. VOMA maintains a web site at www.voma.org. The web site contains information on the Association, upcoming training and conferences, current and past issues of VOMA newsletters, and links to related sites. Watch for regular additions and improvements on the web page.
2. VOMA provides a listserve, intended to provide a medium for networking and sharing of relevant information, resources, and diverse ideas. The VOMA listserve is a benefit for members only. The listserve is an e-mail-based discussion group in which listserve subscribers receive messages sent to all subscribers. This forum allows for the discussion of issues related to victim/offender mediation/conferencing, restorative justice, and activities of VOMA. There are approximately 50 members signed up on the listserve. To send a response to the entire listserve, simply click on "reply:" to the e-mail. To subscribe to the VOMA listserve, send an e-mail to duanerh@fresno.edu with the message: subscribe VOMA list.

should be linked to VOMA's web page, please e-mail Beverly Moore at bevmoore@teleport.com. Upon review, the sites will be added as links to VOMA's web site at www.voma.org.

In order to maintain VOMA's web page as a flourishing resource for information on RJ/VOM, someone needs to regularly tend the site. Much like a garden, the web page needs to be weeded (removal of outdated information), watered (new information added), and fertilized (new innovative methods of presenting the information need to be developed). VOMA is grateful to Duane Ruth-Heffelbower for volunteering his time to tend to VOMA's web site.

This past summer, Duane has added several new articles to the publications page within VOMA's site that you won't want to miss. Among those are:

"A Quick Look at In-house Evaluations" by Dr. William R. Geary, Ph.D. This essay provides practitioners with some basic guidelines for planning program evaluations.

"Circles of Support and Accountability: The Need to Make Room for More Victim/Survivor Input" by David Dyck. This article provides an overview of the Winnipeg, Manitoba, Circles of Support and Accountability Project. The author addresses the concern of victim/survivor input into the field of restorative justice as a whole.

"Indonesia: Restorative Justice for Healing a Divided Society" by Duane Ruth-Heffelbower, presented at the Just Peace? conference in Auckland, New Zealand, earlier this year. Duane's paper examines efforts in Indonesia to apply RJ principles.



Surfing the World Wide Web

A Listing of RJ and Victim Offender Mediation Web sites



Center for Peacemaking
and Conflict Studies



University-Based Sites

<http://www.fau.edu/divdept/caupa/cji>

The Florida Atlantic University Community Justice Institute enhances public safety and community prevention objectives, while also addressing the university's research and service mission. The site contains information about the Balanced and Restorative Justice project (funded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, U.S. Department of Justice), The Center for Advanced Criminal Justice Studies, and the Restorative Justice Trainer's Clearinghouse.

<http://ssw.che.umn.edu/rjp>

The Center for Restorative Justice & Peacemaking is committed to the development of community-based restorative responses to crime and violence that strengthen community safety and social harmony. The site provides resources, training information, publications, links and a bibliography relating to restorative justice and victim offender mediation.

<http://www.fresno.edu/pacs/>

The Fresno Pacific University Center for Peacemaking and Conflict Studies site provides information on RJ academic programs, documents, services, and links.

<http://wcr.sonoma.edu/v1n1/v1n1.html>

The Western Criminology Review is a forum for the publication and discussion of theory, research, policy and practice in the rapidly changing and interdisciplinary fields of criminology and criminal justice. The above address links to Volume 1, Number 1 of the WCR electronic journal, featuring restorative justice.

Faith-Based Sites

www.restorativejustice.org

The goal of Restorative Justice Online is to be a resource of choice for credible, non-partisan information on restorative justice. This site is a service of Prison Fellowship International. RJ Online is edited by Dan Van Ness and Derek Brookes, and includes four sections: The "Conference Centre" is a forum for sharing opinions and personal perspectives on RJ in the real world; the "Library" contains a searchable, annotated bibliography along with reference articles and links to related sites; the "Campus" includes slide show presentations and tutorials; and the "Chapel" contains articles and other materials from the Judeo-Christian tradition.

www.mcc.org

The Mennonite Central Committee is a relief, service, community development and peace agency of the North American Mennonite and Brethren in Christ churches. Mennonites have been central to the RJ and VOM movement over the last three decades. Information on restorative justice, VORP and other related issues can be found under the "Topics" listing on their home page and under "Criminal Justice Issues."

<http://www.justicefellowship.org>

The Justice Fellowship is a non-profit public policy organization dedicated to advancing biblically based restorative justice principles throughout the United States. Their web page provides information on Justice Fellowship projects and news, and RJ publications.

<http://www.bu.edu/sth/BTI/progs/rj/rjustice.htm>

The web page of the Boston Theological Institute Working Group on Restorative Justice provides an RJ concept paper and links to other universities.

<http://www.arastar.net/org/uujj/uujj.htm>

The Unitarian Universalists for Juvenile Justice Restorative Justice Project provides RJ questions and answers, and a sermon on the restorative model of justice.

<http://gbgm-umc.org>

The General Board of Global Ministries, The United Methodist Church site provides a search for RJ topics.

U.S. Regional/State Sites

<http://www.corr.state.mn.us/organization/commjuv/restorativejustice.htm>

The Minnesota Department of Corrections, Community and Juvenile Services Division site offers publications for downloading and links to other sites.

<http://www.maccac.org/restorat.htm>

The Minnesota Association of Community Corrections Act Counties has pages on RJ that include books, conferences, papers, and links to other RJ related sites.

<http://clem.mscd.edu/~neesii/7-forum.htm>

The Colorado Forum on Community and Restorative Justice exists to facilitate understanding and implementation of restorative and community justice within Colorado. The web page offers information and resources to anyone interested in RJ and VOM.

<http://www.csmmp.org>

The Colorado School Mediation Project has recently released a new video and guidebook "Making Things Right: Restorative Justice for School

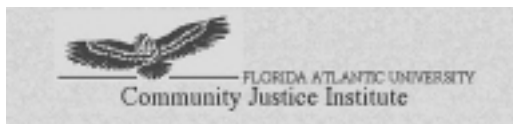


Restorative

RestorativeJustice.org



JUSTICE ONLINE



Communities." The site provides information on the project and how to order the video.

<http://www.deschutes.org>

The Deschutes County, Oregon, site provides a search for two articles on restorative justice by Denny Maloney and Edward Barajas.

<http://www.voma.org/rivorp>

The Rhode Island Victim Offender Restoration Program is a site hosted by VOMA. The site provides information on the Rhode Island VORP, articles, and a RIVORP brochure.

<http://public.doc.state.vt.us/Communit.htm>

The Vermont Department of Corrections site provides information on Vermont's Conferencing and Reparative Boards.

Other Sites

<http://www.voma.org>

VOMA's web page includes VOMA newsletters since 1996, RJ and VOM articles and documents, recommended ethical guidelines for VOM practice, information on our annual Training Institute and Conference, and links to other RJ/VOM sites.

<http://www.realjustice.org>

Real Justice is a non-profit provider of conferencing training and technical assistance. Their site contains information on conferencing and restorative training, events, books & videos.

<http://www.vorp.com>

The Victim-Offender Reconciliation Program Information and Resource Center is a resource, training and service providing organization. The Director, Marty Price, specializes in drunk driving

fatality cases. The site includes articles, papers, links and organizational information.

<http://www.restorativejustice.com>

Tom Cavanagh has a site that is dedicated to learning together how to heal the harm of crime. The site includes dialogue papers, case studies, training and a bulletin board.

<http://www.rji.org>

The Restorative Justice Institute. This site provides information on RJI services, projects and news. The Resources section includes the ten best RJ books, along with an additional dozen books reviewed by Russ Immarigeon.

<http://www.tja.com.au>

Transformative Justice Australia (TJA) is a practical philosophy that sees crime as a violation of people and the relationships between them. It views the conflict resulting from crime as an opportunity to achieve transformative healing for all those affected. Their web page includes TJA history, philosophy, services, news and feedback from clients.

Canadian Sites

<http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/html/restjust-e.htm>

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police work with communities to ensure the safety of all Canadians. The search on their home page lists 151 RJ references. The site's specific address listed above provides an overview of Community Justice Forums.

<http://www.usask.ca>

The University of Saskatchewan. Do a search at the home page for "Circles" and "Native Law" to access references to books, articles, the Native Law Centre Publications, and guides for sentencing circles.

<http://www.sgc.gc.ca>

This page highlights the Canadian Ministry of the Solicitor General who is charged with protecting Canadians and helping to maintain Canada as a peaceful and safe society. Their home page has a "Search our Site" box that will lead you to a list of RJ literature, reports, publications and research information.

International Sites

<http://www.aic.gov.au/rjustice>

The Australian Institute of Criminology. The Institute focuses on the study and information dissemination of crime and criminal justice in Australia. The RJ section includes documents, publications and links to other sites.

<http://www.justice.govt.nz>

Ministry of New Zealand. From the home page, create a search for restorative justice publications, reports and discussion papers.

U.S. Government Sites

<http://ojjdp.ncjrs.org>

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. In the site's search there are 5,000 documents listed under "Restorative Justice."

<http://www.usdoj.gov>

The U.S. Department of Justice has a search on their home page that references 60 RJ documents.



Minnesota Juvenile Arson Conference

Case Study Demonstrates Multi-Party Community Dialogue

by Tara Ronayne and Stephanie Saybyan

This case-study is about an arson offense by two juvenile males, in which they burned 11 Biffs outdoor toilets. We contacted the local parks and recreation department for a pre-meeting with a representative from their department along with maintenance and fire department representatives. The recreation department had fielded calls from the community about the Biffs being removed from the parks when the children in the community had evening sports activities and there were no restroom facilities in the area. The community members were upset at having lost the use of the Biffs on account of the offenders.

The parks maintenance supervisor was responsible for cleaning up the areas after the fire. He spoke of the mess the arson left and about how short-staffed they already were. This took hours away from other community projects. The fire department had to send several units out each time there was a fire call, which cost the taxpayers money and created a danger on the road for motorists and firefighters.

All the representatives were curious about the facts of the case, what the juveniles were like, and how the meeting would go. They were very eager to take part in the meeting, as each had a piece to share. The monetary restitution was only \$30 for grass seed and labor hours to replant some of the burned areas. They were insured by Biffs for the rest of the damages.

Next, we contacted the parks director of an adjacent city. He shared with us that the community also called them to ask about the loss of the Biffs in the park. The director was also concerned because

two older trees and a fence were also burned down in the fires. This cost hours to clean up and affected the communities' sense of safety. The director was willing to set up some community service hours to help the juveniles pay off their restitution ...a \$1459 loss.

We also contacted the Biffs company and met with two representatives. They discussed how much work it is to deliver and maintain the Biffs units in the parks and that they were very frustrated that vandalism happened so often. They stated that they have never caught offenders or prosecuted a case until now, so they were very excited that we were offering this meeting to them. Their total restitution was over \$10,000, but they were sympathetic to the fact that these were very young juveniles and talked about coming down in the amount that they expected.

We also met with the juvenile offenders and parents. The first one was apologetic and felt they had been "stupid" to do this. He talked about being bored and heard that other kids had done it and they wanted to carry on the tradition. They did not get caught for a long time and got spooked because of an article in the community newspaper about the incident. They bragged to friends and eventually they were caught by an anonymous report to the fire marshal. The father was very supportive of the process and thanked us for helping his son understand how serious this offense was. He had taken all of his son's wages through the summer to save for restitution.

We also met with the other juvenile and his father. He was a little more shy than the first one. He also felt terrible about the incident and stated they did not know how expensive the damage was.

would speak first. They each spoke about the things they had told us in the pre-meetings. The boys listened intently and when it came their turn, they said that they did not realize how far-reaching this offense was. They apologized a couple of times and tried to describe why they did this. They said that there was no good reason except that they felt bored and invincible. They both agreed that the worst punishment had been from their families. The mothers were visibly upset at the meeting and it was difficult for them to describe how disappointing this was to them.

The hard part of the meeting came when the restitution was discussed. The Biffs Company loses were \$3,700, one community's loses were \$30, and the other's were \$1,459. This would set each of the boys at \$2,115 in restitution. The families were struggling with the large amount of restitution. Biffs did explain that they had already reduced the amount by quite a lot and they felt that the amount they were asking for was fair. The boys and their families discussed some payment options and plans. They then agreed to pay the amount of restitution requested. Also mentioned was a request that the juveniles each write an anonymous letter to the community newspaper apologizing to the community for the fear they caused. The families both agreed to the articles in the paper.

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Tara Ronayne and Stephanie Saybyan are Probation Officers and Conference Facilitators with Dakota County Community Corrections.

The day of the meeting came and all parties arrived on time. Everyone agreed that the victims

VOM Trial in Sweden Provides Opportunity for Program Support and Evaluation

Rapid Growth of VOM Programs Demonstrated

by Christina Nehlin

After spending 6-7 years in "VOM society," and following the development in Sweden, other countries in Europe, and – at a distance – the USA, I'm well aware that victim offender mediation can be introduced and practiced in a great number of ways. I'm sure I'm not the only one who, at both national and international conferences, has asked myself "Are we really talking about the same thing here?" Confusing or not, I think we all feel we are helping each other by exchanging experiences. To make my contribution to the building of knowledge (and confusion?) I here invite readers to share the recent development of victim/offender mediation (VOM) in Sweden.

VOM Trial Project Begins

In April 1998, the Swedish government gave the National Council for Crime Prevention the task of introducing, supporting and evaluating a trial of mediation for young offenders. The aim for the one-year trial was to give grounds for further decisions concerning mediation.

The trial activities began in the autumn of 1998. Although the Department of Justice expressed a wish that the projects have various forms of organization, most applications concerned projects organized by the municipal social welfare services (social welfare services play a different role in European countries than in the USA; in Sweden they are by law required to take part in societal development). Thirty-two projects throughout Sweden were selected. About ten of them were existing projects; the rest applied for start-up funding.

The projects were operated in close contact with the police. In Sweden, it is not uncommon to have good collaboration between local police and social workers, especially concerning young criminals. Some projects, however, found it difficult in the beginning to start a functional collaboration with police. This difficulty seems to have diminished during the year of the trial. The police referred most of the cases for mediation (70%), followed by social services (12%). As few as three cases were referred by prosecutors. The projects were also run in collaboration with victim support organizations, the courts and religious bodies.

During the trial year, 590 mediation protocols were referred to the evaluator. Of those, 414 of them concerned performed mediations and the rest were cases that never came to direct mediation (though

History of VOM in Sweden

VOM has been discussed with interest in different settings over the last 20 years in Sweden, but merely at a theoretical level. Single politicians have made demands in the Swedish parliament for a governmental-run trial on at least five occasions over the last few years. In the meantime, practitioners have grasped the idea of VOM and put it into practice. In the mid-90's, Sweden had only 4-5 active projects – today, a few years later, approximately 50 projects are active, with a continued interest in starting new projects. Much of the recent development is due to the recently completed governmental trial with VOM.

Christina Nehlin is a social worker and initiator of one of the first mediation projects in Sweden (1994). She is an experienced mediator and the author of a book introducing mediation in Sweden. She was project coordinator in the Council's trial project, and co-author of the final report. She is an appointed expert in the Commission on Mediation with Juvenile Offenders. Christina can be reached at her e-mail:

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International VOM News

International Juvenile
Conference

"Restorative Justice as a Challenge for the New Millennium," 4th International Conference on Restorative Justice for Juveniles.

October 1-4, 2000

Tuebingen, Germany

Hosted by the German Institute of
Criminology, University of Tuebingen

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European Forum presents
VOM/RJ Newsletter

The European Forum for Victim-Offender Mediation and Restorative Justice recently published and distributed their first newsletter. The newsletter will be a tool for people all over Europe - and beyond - to access information of European and international RJ/VOM relevance, including innovative projects or practice-related matters, new developments in policy, implementation, legislation, training, literature and research. The next issue will appear in November, 2000.

For more information on the Forum or to receive the newsletter contact:

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Sweden

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other measures might have taken place, like indirect mediation and/or other forms of victim support, etc). About half of the cases concerned minor offenses such as shoplifting and damaging (a fact that shows the projects are in the early stages of development). Ten percent concerned violent offenses. One-third of the mediations included offenders who were younger than 15-years-old, the age of criminal responsibility.

Two limited, qualitative studies of victims and offenders respectively have been carried out during the trial period. These studies show *inter alia* that when the offender met their individual victim, the chances were good for the offender to achieve an emotionally grounded knowledge of the consequences of their offense. This created insight, which is often expected to lead to reduced recidivism. Victims experienced a sense of relief and a termination of feelings associated with the crime. Victims also felt better that the offender was no longer anonymous and that they had been "provided with a face."

Conclusions

In conclusion of the trial project, the Council foresees that the development of mediation projects will continue, and recommends that the social services be the body that undertakes the activity, operated independently from ordinary social work. The Council also concludes that clearer legal provisions would give VOM enhanced legitimacy and vigour. The Council also recommends that if the main purpose of VOM is to prevent recidivism, mediation in shoplifting is not strategic as a general measure because most shoplifters do not repeat offenses. Mediation as a crime-preventing measure should therefore be focused towards crime with higher recidivism rates, such as vehicle theft, robbery and theft.

As a general conclusion, the Council states that VOM in Sweden is still in its early stages and in process of further development. With any future expansion of VOM there needs to be increased knowledge and training (especially concerning victim issues), and the increased exchange of experiences between projects.



Interview

continued from page 1

Another way to see it is to emphasize that restitution is not only a contractual obligation to the victim, but also to look at restitution that the offender should owe in some way to the community. This heightens the sense of accountability.

Q: Do you envision the two fields becoming one movement?

A: I certainly believe that victim assistance has to adjust to work with restorative justice projects – otherwise they are letting victims down. And I certainly think restorative justice can include supporting victim assistance. It talks about allowing victims to speak, to participate, be present at all proceedings, so all of that underscores victim rights. In fact, it goes beyond the rights we believe victims should have in the formal system, which we describe as "a voice, not a veto."

Again, the barrier is the perception that people for restorative justice are offender-oriented, not victim-oriented, and it causes problems. I don't see it that way, though. The paradigm of restorative justice and a constitutional amendment for victim

rights is what we are working for at NOVA. But, I can understand why people see restorative justice as a whole as offender-oriented because much of the focus is on the needs of the offenders.

Q: What do you suggest restorative justice practitioners do to try to help alleviate that tension, so that people will feel that if there is an "orientation," it's toward both victim and offender?

A: Emphasize the value of telling the story – victim advocates know of the importance of this for victims.

Explain to the victim that if they hear from the offender, including having their questions answered as best he or she can, it will help them to complete their story. It makes it easier to understand how this awful event happened and helps them put the experience into a better, clearer shape for themselves.

Don't set up the victim to expect that this experience of meeting with the offender will turn either of their lives around or that the repair will be satisfactory, because if you make that pledge and it doesn't happen, they will be doubly disappointed – one more secondary injury.

Ask the victims, "What are your expectations?" Then caution that these specifics might happen or might not, and help the victim think about what it might be like if they don't.

There is sometimes a very subtle imparting to the victim that there is an expectation of forgiveness. Some victims may have a personal need to forgive as a part of the reconstruction of their lives. And in fact, they may never have been told by a mediator that they need to forgive. But they do pick up on that as a goal of having an encounter with the offender. Practitioners shouldn't even allude to it as a goal.

And they should caution the victims that participating is a huge emotional investment and that their attempt to discuss the event could trigger traumatic reactions. They may go home fully exhausted, drained, and distressed or very "high" and then crash, almost like post-partum blues. Good programs should have proper emotional support available before, during and after the meeting.

These cautions apply to all kinds of crimes – felonies, misdemeanors, crimes of violence or against property – not only cases that someone other than the victim may consider emotionally risky.

It's also important for mediators to specifically encourage the victims to consider what the offenders can actively do to make things right, after doing something wrong and hurtful. Sometimes victims may not realize that they can ask the offenders to take specific actions, either in terms of their own behavior or to do something for the victim or the community.

Finally, explain that restorative justice is a process that seeks to find a mutually-satisfactory, just resolution for the harm done – or something approaching it. I, for one, do not consider it a "failure" if one or both parties back off – so long as the discussion is held in good faith. The victim's right to end the dialogue before agreement is reached must be emphasized.

Q: What kind of training would you suggest would be necessary to develop victim-sensitive facilitation skills?

A: I don't believe it takes an advanced clinician to understand the effects of trauma and to effectively assist victims. I would say practitioners need 40 to 80 hours of training. NOVA just

announced its two new credentialing programs, recognized already by three universities. Participants in the first would be tested, after a 40-hour basic victim advocacy training, on subjects including crisis intervention, understanding the impacts of various types of crime, and working in the criminal justice system with allies such as prosecutors and law enforcement. The second credential, following a 40-hour community crisis response training, would test on additional advanced subjects, such as understanding some of the physiology of trauma, and a model of crisis intervention applicable to individuals and victimized groups.

Q: What do you see as the role of victim assistance personnel in victim offender encounters?

A: Victim services folks should be trained to be supporters for participants and certainly it would be very reasonable for them also to become trained facilitators, if they are interested in either function.

The National Organization for Victim Assistance can be contacted at:

tel: 202/232-6682
e-mail: nova@try-nova.org
www.try-nova.org
The Victim Hotline number is:
1-800-TRY-NOVA (879-6682)



Notes from Jan Bellard

I recently attended a workshop on "Promising Practices in Restitution," presented by Ann Crowe of the America Probation and Parole Association. They have done a research project, funded by the USDOJ Office of Victims of Crime, in which they surveyed restitution programs all over the country and have come up with a list of creative restitution practices and elements that increase the likelihood of payment. The research was done from a "Restorative Justice" framework, with the elements of a "successful" program including:

- repay victims for losses caused by crimes;
- hold offenders accountable;
- involve the community in meeting victims' needs and holding offenders accountable;
- may repay losses suffered by the community.

Ann presented an overview of their findings, and victim-offender mediation is listed as a factor that can increase the likelihood of payment. The final report has gone to OVC for vetting and Ann hopes it will be published soon for public consumption. But you can get some preliminary information on the results by contacting:

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Jan Bellard is Restorative Justice Project Director for Mediation Network of North Carolina and a VOMA Board Member.