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Volunteer

SPRING 1992

*...advocating justice...peacemaking...serving basic human needs...
...maintaining the integrity of creation...*

I Was Sick and You Looked After Me — Reflections on a New Year's Day

Chris Bohlander
Project Transitions
Austin, Texas

I arrived at Project Transitions early on New Year's Day. We had a full house of five residents at the AIDS hospice. As I was making my rounds, I noticed that "Bill's" condition had taken a sharp downward slide since the night before. He was now "actively dying." His lungs were partially filled with fluid as evidenced by the sound of his labored breathing. Each breath came with difficulty and his strength was waning. He looked very frightened. I phoned the first person on his list of people to notify. "If you want to be with him during his last few hours, you should come to the house soon."

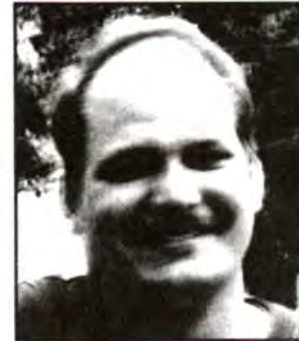
Bill's friends arrived quickly. By mid-morning 15 people were taking turns standing around his bed, four or five at a time. They held his hands, rubbed his feet, placed wet cloths on his brow, wiped away the fluid as he coughed it out of his lungs, and all the while told him how much he was loved. As the day passed, each breath became more difficult. His friends stayed beside him and cried and laughed and held each other. The look on Bill's face eased and he seemed almost content. The power of the gathered community, Christ-power, filled the room.

Bill died that evening. We all had experi-

enced something wonderfully beautiful.

"I was sick and you looked after me," is from the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 25.

Christ included looking after the sick as behavior worthy of God's blessing. I have experienced this blessing through my work here at the AIDS hospice. The act of coming together to be with one another in times of need provides the context in which we can experience Christ-power. All of the actions named in Matthew 25 are acts of service. We, as BVSers, have a wonderful opportunity to experience God's empowering presence daily through our own acts of service. I have found this to be the most exciting aspect of my first six months here in Austin. It has been a time of much personal growth. I have been richly blessed. I pray that I will continue to recognize this, especially on days like this past New Year's Day when not only Bill, but two others at the hospice also died. As we continue to be servants, may we be aware of the Christ-power in our lives and continue to experience its blessings.



Do not depend on the hope of results. When you are doing the sort of work you have taken on, essentially an apostolic work, you may have to face the fact that your work will be apparently worthless and achieve no result at all, if not results opposite to what you expect. As you get used to this idea, you start more and more to concentrate not on the results but on the value, the rightness, the truth of the work itself. And there too a great deal has to be gone through, as gradually you struggle less and less for an idea and more and more for specific people . . . In the end, it is the reality of personal relationships that saves everything.

- Thomas Merton

Church of the Brethren General Board

1451 Dundee Avenue Elgin, Illinois 60120-1694 708 742 5100



Church of the Brethren

April 21, 1993

Susan Stroud
Office on National Service
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Susan,

I must apologize. When I mailed a packet of information to you yesterday, I completely forgot to enclose these items.

I'm sorry if this created any inconvenience.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Cindy".

Cindy Phillips,
Secretary
Brethren Volunteer Service

/cp
enc.

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yes

I WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT
BRETHREN VOLUNTEER SERVICE.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

TELEPHONE _____

RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION _____

You will receive a project booklet, a sample volunteer covenant, dates for this year's orientations, and an application.

Mail this form to:

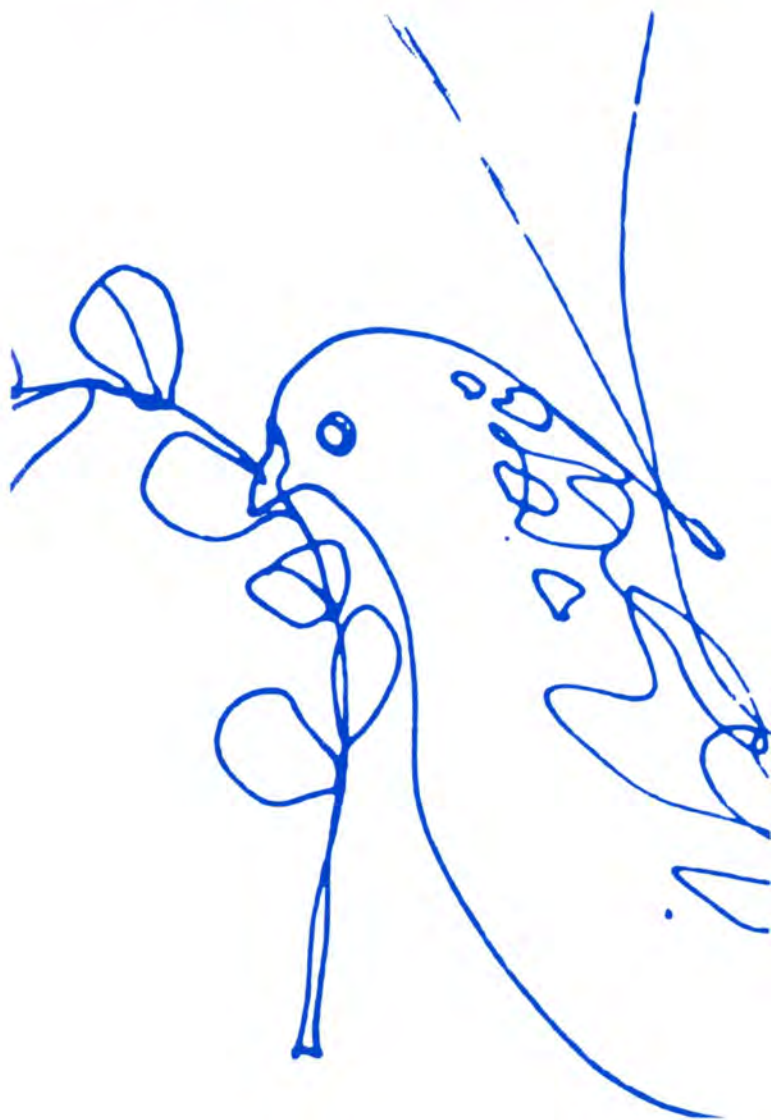
BVS Recruitment
1451 Dundee Ave.
Elgin, IL 60120

or call: (708) 742-5100

Janet Schrock, Director
Debbie Eisenbise, Recruitment/Orientation



Brethren Volunteer Service



Sharing God's Love Through Acts of Service

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Volunteer

WINTER 1993

*...advocating justice...peacemaking...serving basic human needs...
...maintaining the integrity of creation...*

It's About Relationships. . .

Marty Shifflett
Cafe 458
Decatur, Georgia



What does a 34-year-old audiologist suffering from job burnout do for renewal? A sensible person would travel for a month or so, but I decided to join BVS. I'd like to say that I entered BVS because of what I wanted to do for others. But actually the thing that caused me to become a BVSer was mostly my own selfish motives. I figured that I could take a leave of absence from my job, do something totally different for one year, and then return as an energetic employee. Well, that was a little over three years ago. I've been renewed alright, but my volunteer work has become a lifestyle rather than a break from my "normal" job. Initially I didn't have to think about leaving a career and losing benefits and a retirement plan —after all, I was only doing this for one year.

It only took me four months on project to realize that I would never return to my job, and it was then that I had to think about the issues of security. I played it safe for awhile and maintained my audiology certification and licensure. That way I could always go back to a good paying job when I wanted. But after my second year on project I decided that audiology was not a vocation I was interested in returning to, and I did not renew my certification. The security aspects flooded my mind for a period of time and I was scared. Was I being foolish? I kept thinking about how I was single and the youngest member of my family - so who would take care of me if and when the time came? I still don't have the answer to that question, but the positive experiences I'm having now in BVS far outweigh my fears of the future.

God "called" me here—not so much for what I

had to offer, but what I had to gain for me, personally. I needed to get away from the comfort of my job, my rural community, my little country Brethren church, and have my eyes opened to the injustices of this world. Important issues like homelessness, that I used to ignore, now face me every day. And it's not just issues, it's people. People who have faces and names.

I work in a restaurant for the homeless—a safe, friendly environment where men, women, and children are given choices and served with dignity. An emphasis is placed on developing relationships. It's a place where someone can share his or her story and another person will listen.

One guest explained it best. After coming to eat at the cafe for over a month, she said, "It's not about the food here, it's about relationships."

And that's what keeps me here—relationships—with the guests at the cafe and the people I live with in community. Relationships that challenge me and influence my growth—emotional and spiritual. I don't know how long my volunteering will last, at least until September 1993 and maybe a lot longer. But I do know that what I have seen, heard, and felt here will affect me forever. Even if I return to a paying job, I believe I will be different than in my previous life. Perhaps it's in small ways that I'll continue to be different—like living more simply, being more aware politically, caring at a deeper level. Regardless, my BVS experience has changed me for the rest of my life.



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(45pp)

BVS [Brethren Volunteer Service]
Project Booklet

BVS Project Booklet

"Sharing God's love through acts of
service" is at the core of . . .

1993

Brethren Volunteer Service

A program of the
World Ministries Commission
of the Church of the Brethren
General Board

The program is grounded in Christian Faith and
brings a spiritual dimension to:

Advocating Justice
Working for Peace
Serving Basic Human Needs
Maintaining the Integrity of Creation

These goals are carried out through the work of volunteers
on specific projects listed in this booklet.

Church of the Brethren General Board

1451 Dundee Avenue Elgin, Illinois 60120-1694 708 742 5100



Church of the Brethren

April 20, 1993

Susan Stroud
Office on National Service
1600 Pennsylvania Ave.
Washington D.C. 20500

Dear Susan,

We came away from our meeting with you feeling that the Council of Religious Volunteer Agencies (CRVA) and the National Council of Churches' (NCC) program on urban service was very visible to the commission on National Service.

Eli Segal wrapped up our conversation saying to us, "I know what is important to you. You seek to continue student loan cancellation and to receive loan cancellation for your volunteers, if National Service Volunteers receive these incentives." That was our message to you. It was affirming to hear this reflected back to us.

You and I briefly spoke about Brethren Volunteer Service orientations which served as a model for the Peace Corps. We provide four 3-week training programs a year for our volunteers. We build "group" responsibility from the beginning by designing small "food groups" which plan, shop, and prepare meals for up to 30 on \$2.25 per day. This may sound impossible, but all eat very well and learn how to live a life of simplicity by working as a group.

We provide sessions on the urban crisis, communication, simple living, world issues, etc. The volunteers also participate in work experiences in shelters and soup kitchens. During this 3-week orientation we immerse our volunteers in living at the poverty level. Most are recent college graduates who desire to sacrifice and to serve. Their living and medical expenses are provided by the project. Volunteers earn \$45 pocket money monthly. Most of them say that "it's the empty pocket they miss" once their service is over. We are seriously teaching life-style and sacrifice.

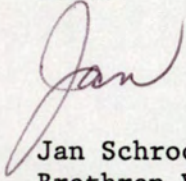
We would be willing to share our orientation model with you and during the upcoming Service Summit in May.

You asked for information on projects working with mediation and reconciliation. We have 4 sites where volunteers serve. I agree with you, these skills are of great importance in these times. Volunteers become trained, serve as mediators, and then go on to

careers in this field. Enclosed please find information and position descriptions for volunteers.

Thank you for your genuine interest and considerations.

Peace.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Jan", with a stylized, flowing script.

Jan Schrock, Director
Brethren Volunteer Service
Council of Religious Volunteer Agencies (CRVA)



A Mission Project Report

COMMUNITY MEDIATION CENTER

#1/93

The Community Mediation Center (CMC), a non-profit community service organization, was established in January of 1982 by a group of persons in the Harrisonburg, Rockingham County area. They saw the need for a creative and positive way of dealing with conflict. It was the first community based mediation center in Virginia.

The philosophy of the CMC is that while conflict acts as a healthy and creative force for change, failing to deal with it in a constructive manner damages individuals and relationships. Often, persons avoid open confrontation because they are uncomfortable with it or do not have the skills to handle it. Mediation and conflict resolution training provides these skills and enables people to face and creatively channel conflict rather than allowing hostilities to build toward violence or litigation.

CMC currently is divided into three specialized areas: Mediation Services, Training and Workshops for Adults, and Peer Mediation for Schools. Mediation Services focuses on providing mediation for a wide variety of disputes including divorce and visitation, domestic, neighborhood, consumer/merchant, co-workers, landlord/tenant, employer/employee, victim/offender, church and organization. The number of cases per month continue to increase at a study pace. Right now we are averaging 60 cases per month. We are also expanding into corporations and businesses providing multi-party mediation. Recently we have also been increasingly receiving calls to facilitate meetings when topics are of a controversial nature.

CMC offers basic and advanced training and workshops in conflict resolution and mediation skills. These training are tailored to the specific needs of businesses or organizations, as well as professional groups. The training and workshops are noted for their experiential nature blending theory with role-plays and skills building.

In 1986, CMC started the first student mediation program in Virginia to equip children to face and resolve conflict. The program of "peer mediation" is now recognized statewide as an opportunity to teach life skills in communications and conflict resolution, as well as empowering young persons to resolve their conflicts without violence. The training are designed for educators who wish to teach students conflict resolution skills and implement a successful elementary, middle or high school mediation program.

My main duties at CMC have been client intake and mediation. During intake, I listen to the client's concerns and explain the mediation process. I receive intakes over the phone, in person at the Center, and weekly at court. Intake is an extremely difficult job. It takes a skilled person to listen to highly emotional people and at the same time advocate and explain the mediation process. After doing an intake, I speak with the other party/parties to hear their concerns, explain the process and see if they are willing to give mediation a try. I then select appropriate mediators and schedule a mediation. We have approximately 30 volunteer mediators who come from varied backgrounds.

As a mediator, I guide and encourage communication between the parties. I do not take sides, place blame, or pass judgement. I am a "process facilitator," which means I am there to listen to each perspective and then help the parties communicate and work together to come up with solutions to their issues and concerns that everyone can feel good about. All decisions are made by the parties. Nothing goes into an Agreement that one of the parties is uncomfortable with or feels is unfair. Our goal is to help people solve their conflicts in a non-adversarial way.

I am continually excited and energized being a part of a program that is expanding in all areas and is really noted for its expertise in the area of conflict resolution and mediation. I am also thrilled to be a part of work that I feel is consistent to my beliefs and values as a member of the Church of the Brethren. I grew up very much aware of our peace stance and our focus to work with people who are less fortunate. I was taught to be open to all kinds of people, love my neighbor as myself and talk directly to people when having a disagreement. I was also taught that, as Brethren, we needed to promote world peace and show others that there are alternatives to fighting.

With those teachings as my foundations, I feel very fortunate to be able to work at the CMC. I have a need to work in a job where the goal is to make a positive impact on society. I feel that most of our conflicts on a personal and world basis are because of misunderstandings and assumptions often based on the inability to see the other's perspective. Mediation and conflict resolution encourages the people in conflict to hear each other's concerns, which helps them reach a deeper understanding of each other and can help reduce future conflicts. I feel that educating people in alternative ways to deal with conflict is the first step to world peace. I am glad I can be a part of that step.

I am encouraged when I see the mediation process restoring relationships and healing wounds. I have seen people who cannot look at each other when they come in, smile with relief when they leave. It is a joy to see people pick up skills in training and apply them to all aspects of their lives. For me, my experience at the Center has been mostly positive. However, I do get frustrated when I feel our services could be beneficial to someone, but he/she isn't willing to give it a try. And sometimes I find it discomfoting to hear about all the pain and hurt people are going through. But I am glad that I can be an empathetic ear, and I hope they take something positive from our interaction.

The short-term goals for CMC, as I understand them, are to continue to provide and expand the current mediation and conflict resolution services that we are providing. The long-term goals are to expand our services into new areas where mediation can be applicable. Our hope is that increasingly mediation will be used as an alternative and that people may be able to use conflict resolution skills to solve their conflicts by themselves.

Noelle Dulabaum

2-15-93

VORP Volunteers Helped:

- a teenager face the young couple he had victimized by breaking into their house. An agreement on restitution was reached; fears were relieved; an apology was accepted.*
- an employer deal with an employee who had stolen money from the cash register. They agreed on how the loss was to be repaid. The employer then was instrumental in finding employment for the offender.*

You Can Help

- Volunteer as a mediator
- Make a tax-deductible donation to support our program
- Contribute supplies, equipment and your time
- If you are a victim of a crime, ask to participate in VORP
- Tell your friends and neighbors about VORP

VORP Serves Our Community

VORP of Linn County is a non-profit, community organization. Its board of directors represents a wide variety of church and civic organizations in the county. Local volunteers are trained as mediators to resolve conflicts.

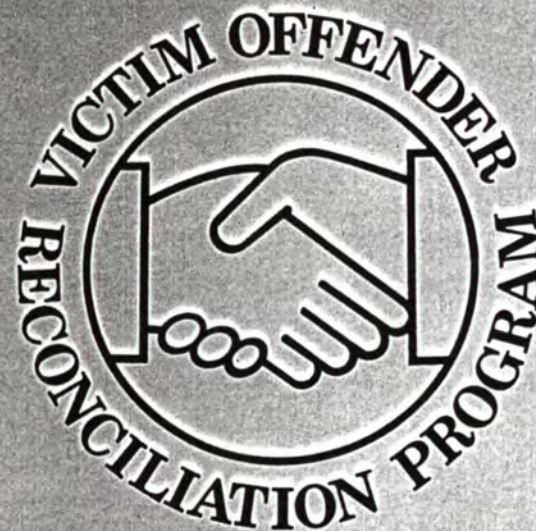
VORP is a low-cost program which depends on local financial resources. Its services are free and available to all persons regardless of race or religion.

VORP of Linn County is modeled after successful programs in several other states.



Mail donations to:

VORP OF LINN COUNTY
P.O. Box 861
Albany, OR 97321
Phone: (503) 928-5323



VORP
OF LINN COUNTY

A CREATIVE COMMUNITY
ALTERNATIVE

Why VORP Is Needed

After crimes have been committed, victims often experience financial and emotional losses as well as uncertainty about what will happen to their cases in the criminal justice system. They have questions about why they were victimized and who did it. Fearful that it could happen again, they need some answers.

Offenders may be unaware of the real financial and human costs of their crimes. Their cases may be processed through the criminal justice system and they may be punished without ever having to face their victims and take responsibility for making things right.

VORP of Linn County is working to change this. VORP provides opportunities for victims and offenders to meet face to face. Victims have a chance to get answers to their questions, to express their feelings and to negotiate restitution. Offenders learn the consequences of their criminal offenses and have opportunities to make things right.

VORP incorporates a somewhat different view of crime. It recognizes that crime involves a conflict between people, that one person has violated another, and that ways must be found to make things right, to repair the wrong. It also recognizes the community's responsibility in the conflict.

How VORP Works

A case is referred to VORP from the judicial system. A trained volunteer mediator explains VORP to the victim and offender in separate meetings.

The mediator arranges a face-to-face meeting if both parties agree to participate. In the meeting, the victim and offender discuss the facts of the case, air feelings and negotiate restitution.

A restitution contract, signed by both parties, is returned to the referring agency. VORP maintains communication with both parties until the terms of the contract are met.

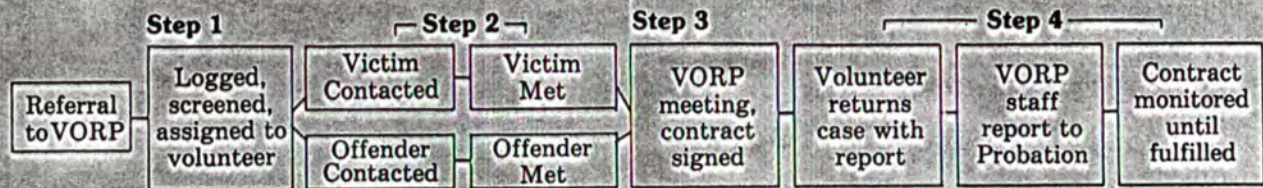
Why It Works

The restitution contract prompts the offender to accept responsibility for the crime.

Benefits of VORP

The VORP process is simple, yet it is a powerful tool for resolving conflict. Here's why:

- Victims have their questions answered and experience satisfaction in planning compensation for their losses.
- Offenders face the real costs of their crimes and begin to take responsibility for making things right.
- Judges and probation officers have a community alternative available to them in dealing with criminal offenders.
- The community is offered the opportunity to solve some of its own problems instead of looking to the state for solutions. Resolution and restitution are more productive and less expensive than some other sentencing alternatives.



APR 28 1992

PROJECT # 430

PROJECT FORM

(Please print or type)

Name of Project: VORP of Linn County

Project Address: P.O. Box 861 Albany, Or 97321

Immediate supervisor for this job: Jane Stevens - Executive Director

Date this position is open: Summer / Fall 1992

Job Title: Program Coordinator

Job Description: Please include specific duties that the volunteer would be required to do. If duties are flexible according to skills and interests of the volunteer, please state this. Also, please list minimum requirements in terms of education, skills and/or abilities.

The duties of the volunteer will be flexible according to the skills and interest of the volunteer. The areas of responsibility will be assisting in the development of a community mediation program, developing an expanded mediation curriculum to include community and business mediation, and in recruitment, training and retention of volunteers - particularly in the outlying areas of Linn County, and grant writing.

The minimum requirements for this position include a Bachelors Degree in Human Development or a related field; a background or interest in mediation as a form of conflict resolution; ability to work with a diverse population; computer skills; a valid drivers license; and willingness to submit to a routine criminal background check.

Description of project: Please include overall purposes or goals of the organization, description of the program(s), size of your organization, brief description of your location (town, city, area, etc.) and anything else you think would be helpful for prospective volunteers to know.

The Victim Offender Reconciliation Program (VORP) of Linn Co. is a community-based, non-profit agency, offering a creative and unique dispositional alternative for our local justice system. Accepting referrals from the courts, juvenile department, schools and other referring agencies the program is designed to provide a means for payment of restitution by the offender to the victim and, ideally achieve reconciliation.

The VORP process involves a face-to-face meeting between the victim and the offender facilitated by a trained volunteer from the community. The process addresses the anger, loss, pain and fear of the victim while personalizing the crime for the offender. After the facts and the personal impact of the case are discussed, restitution is negotiated and an agreement is signed. VORP monitors the contract until fulfillment.

VORP is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors who represent a cross section of Linn County. Currently there are 26 active volunteer mediators. VORP is experiencing rapid growth in the number of referrals. We are also committed to beginning a program of community mediation in Linn Co. and are currently working in one of the high schools providing training for a peer mediation program.

Albany is the county seat for Linn County, which is a blue collar community largely dependent on agriculture and forestry. Albany is located in the Willamette Valley which is 65 miles from the ocean and about the same distance from the Cascade Mountains. The climate is mild, with warm sunny summers with frequent rain during the fall, winter and spring.

Housing for Volunteer:

____ living in community

____ living in independent apartment

____ living on project site

☒ living with family (private bedroom provided)

____ other

Description of housing: _____

Comments: