VORP made possible by people responding to the call of service...

Service connects our moral beliefs and the life we live

by Ron Claassen

“There is a call to us, a call to service—that we join with others to try to make things better in this world.” Robert Coles, in his book *The Call of Service*, attributed this quote to Dorothy Day, 1955. Coles describes service as the connecting point between our moral beliefs and our life lived.

Roxanne and I (married for nearly 29 years) have been reading this book together. (We have found reading some selected books aloud together is one good relationship building experience for us.) This quote, his description of service, and much of the content of this book have provided us with significant discussion material. We would highly recommend it. It seemed that we couldn’t read much without relating it to personal experiences and VORP.

After first escaping victims’ pursuit...

Graffiti offender turns himself in, makes things right

by Jacqueline Sichon

Our story this month is from Jacqueline Sichon. Jacqueline has completed seven cases. In October of 1996 I received a case which seemed as routine as any other case. But, I reminded myself that I have learned no case is routine and life never goes exactly as planned.

I first called the mother of the 15-year-old boy, Phil, who had been charged with graffiti and vandalism. Mother said that she and her son were willing to meet with me the following week. We met as planned at the College Community Church.

Phil told us his version of what happened the night he was arrested. He had been visiting at the home of a friend who had another boy there that Phil knew only slightly. When a family conflict arose, Phil and his new acquaintance, Bob, left the house together and were walking around the neighborhood. Phil said his companion suggested they graffiti a garage that was just ahead of them. Bob pulled a can of spray paint from inside his jacket and proceeded to paint the garage. Bob talked a reluctant Phil into painting one letter on the building.

As they were walking away they saw the owner of the property. In passing, they all said hello and spoke briefly but pleasantly to each other. When the owner saw his garage, he immediately suspected the two boys and, together with his brother, gave chase. They caught Bob, but Phil got away. The owner called the police, who showed up at his home soon thereafter and interrogated Bob. Phil was anxious about what was happening to his new “friend” and if he might be caught by the police later. He decided it would be better to turn himself in, instead of waiting. When he told him version of the story, the

Robert Coles said that he learned from his parents that stories are a means of glimpsing and comprehending the world; they knew that service is a means of putting to use what has been learned, and that in the daily events designated as service, when we are joining together with others to make things better in this world, wonderful stories are encountered and experienced.

I can certainly see this in my parents who, at age 61, are still deeply involved in service. Dad still (as a volunteer) maintains the yard at the church and the church pre-school and delivers hot meals. Mom still devotes substantial time tutoring and loving the children at the pre-school.

When we visit with them, my parents always have many stories to tell of their experiences.

Financial support is critical at this point. Thank you to all who are contributing. As you can see from our story, your service in this way is working to make our world a better place.

VORP relies on your contributions!

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owner and police did not believe him because Bob had blamed him for instigating and painting most of the graffiti. Phil was arrested and the Bob was released.

Phil was very upset that he was held responsible for the all the graffiti when he had only painted one letter but after he heard about the VORP process he still agreed to meet with the property owner and discuss what happened and try to make things as right as possible.

I spoke to victim, the property owner, and he agreed to a mutual meeting. When I called Phil’s home to confirm the date for the mediation, his mother told me that her son had gone to his father’s to live and I would have to contact the father to arrange another meeting. She gave me his pager number as the only means of contacting him.

After many tries during the next two weeks, Phil’s father finally returned my page. Father told me that his son had been falsely accused and pushed around by the arresting officers. He, therefore, saw no obligation or need to participate in the Victim Offender Reconciliation Program.

I called Phil’s mother and explained the situation. She was a great advocate of the VORP process and told me she would try discuss with her son and his father the importance of participating in the program and let me know the results of their conversation. It is now past Halloween and getting close to Thanksgiving.

After Thanksgiving mother called and told me that her ex-husband resented her son, that her son had gone to his father’s to live and she would have to contact the father to arrange another meeting. She gave me his pager number as the only means of contacting him.

Despite frustrating delays, VORP process ends in reconciliation

At this point Thanksgiving is only a memory and Christmas is just around the corner. Shortly after Christmas Julius met with father and son and they agreed to the mediation if the mother would attend the meeting. Julius then put the ball back in my court and asked me to continue with the case.

Once the holidays were over, I again tried to contact the property owner, but found he had moved. I finally reached him at his work number and was assured he would meet with Phil as soon as we could arrange a time. That was the last time I talked to the property owner. He changed work locations and all of my attempts to reach him failed. Again I appealed to Julius for help and again he came through. He somehow contacted the brother of the property owner who had not only been living at the house at the time of the incident, but had also chased the boys. He agreed to the mediation and we set up a joint meeting.

That meeting was canceled because Phil was sick with the flu. The days were warming up, the spring of 1997 was on the horizon. I was at the point where I was getting frustrated, the spring of 1997 was on the horizon. I was at the point where I was getting frustrated, I was at the point where I was getting frustrated, I was at the point where I was getting frustrated, I was at the point where I was getting frustrated, I was at the point where I was getting frustrated, I was at the point where I was getting frustrated, I was at the point where I was getting frustrated.

I tried again, a meeting was set, and we met! Perhaps this lengthy period of delay contributed to the success of the meeting. It seemed Phil had time to consider the fact that one letter of graffiti or twenty letters is still graffiti. That was the last time I talked to the property owner. He changed work locations and all of my attempts to reach him failed. Again I appealed to Julius for help and again he came through. He somehow contacted the brother of the property owner who had not only been living at the house at the time of the incident, but had also chased the boys. He agreed to the mediation and we set up a joint meeting.

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Another exciting part for me was that both Phil’s mother and the owner’s brother are considering becoming VORP volunteers. I was reminded again, patience and persistence pay off.

Thanks Jacqueline!

Blessed are the Peacemakers!

VORP training & experience can have a positive impact on your life!

VORP training includes life skills that can be utilized in all areas of your life including, home, work, church, and all other relationships. VORP offers you an opportunity to put your learning to use in service to help make our community a better place. Join us at one of our upcoming training events.

- May 29, June 5 & 12
- September 12 & 13
- September 16, 23 & 30
- November 7 & 8

Please call Jamie at 291-1120 as soon as possible to make a reservation.

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