Offender discovers victim’s genuine concern through VORP process

by Ka Xiong with Ron Claassen

This story is from VORP mediator Ka Xiong. Ka is a member of the Hmong Alliance of Fresno, she is married and mother of two children. Ka has worked with several VORP cases in addition to her family responsibilities, full time job, and taking night classes.

Working with two cultures was both difficult and wonderful. Actually, I learned some things about my own culture. The offender, Peter, was from my own culture but we didn’t think the same about the importance of restitution.

At our first meeting, Peter’s mother said that they were very busy and they didn’t have time for unnecessary programs. All of a sudden, it hit me like a wave. They didn’t really comprehend the idea of making things right with the person you’ve offended simply because you want to and not just because a court or probation officer has ordered you to. I think it is important you do it because you want to do it and that you know you should do it.

I tried to explain what VORP is really all about and finally it seemed like they were beginning to understand. But, I felt a bit melancholy because it seemed to me that his mother was asking him to participate and he wasn’t really inter-

### Take a byte out of crime

The VORP office has been making the best of obsolete computers for years, but has now begun to affect in efficiency. In order to make our paid and volunteer staff as productive as possible, we would like to equip the VORP office with more powerful computers. We hope to meet or exceed the specifications listed below.

2 Color SVGA Monitors
3 Computers
- Pentium 75
- 16 mb RAM
- 200 mb hard drive
- Windows ’95
- 1.44 Modem (optional)
- CD ROM (optional)

If you would like to donate any of these items or components, please call the VORP office at 291-1120.
VORP bridges cultural gap for Hmong teenager

I was about ready to give up when I got a call from the VORP office and they had talked with Francisco, the victim. I met with Francisco and he said he thought the program was a good idea and he wanted to participate.

I arranged a joint meeting. It was a very good meeting. I was amazed. Peter talked openly and comfortably about what he had done. Francisco seemed to understand Peter and Peter seemed to know that Francisco was there to help make things better. When he asked about Peter’s future plans, it seemed like Peter was unsure and lacked direction. Francisco told Peter that his father was a professor at Fresno State University and that part of what he does is to help arrange career seminars. I could tell that Peter was really glad Francisco was genuinely interested in helping him.

When it came time to discuss the restitution, Peter and his mother explained how much the court costs were and how they were struggling to make it. Francisco suggested that he cut the amount for the damage in half but said that he thought it was really important that Peter pay for the restitution himself. He didn’t want his mother to pay and he added that he could give him time to earn the money. I was struggling with whether that was fair but I could tell that this was what Francisco wanted to do. I felt joyful watching them work this out. I felt the grace of God was working.

I feel overwhelmed when I think about the problems of our Hmong teenagers. There is a generation gap, the education differences, the culture limits, the ongoing effects of the Vietnam War, and the adjustment to living in a totally different country. I see teenagers wanting to work and not able to get jobs. They need a place to start. My instinct is to turn around and walk away. But, from this experience, I realized that another approach is to work at it one case at a time.

Thank you for allowing me to share this wonderful experience.

Thank you Ka Xiong.

Blessed are the Peacemakers!