

Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP)

By Teresa Werner, Public Citizen to ACAJ on 3/17/08

AVP empowers people to liberate themselves and others from violence and to realize there is peace and good in everyone. AVP began in 1975 in Greenhaven Prison in NY and is now successfully taught in more than 40 states and 20 countries. AVP classes are provided entirely by volunteers at no cost to participants.

Workshops are 3 day (21 hour) with 4 main goals:

- Building a community of mutual trust and sharing.
- Finding a sense of self-worth and the worth of others.
- Overcoming communication barriers which lead to thoughtlessness and intolerance.
- Discovering non-violent approaches toward resolving conflicts.
- Identifying the needs and interests of all parties, finding a common goal and solution for all.

Basic Workshop

- Respect for self and others
- Communication skills
- Building trust and community
- Cooperation

Advanced Workshop - Deeper issues of conflict related to:

- Communication
- Anger Management
- Stereotyping
- Power
- Forgiveness

Nevada AVP

In only 1 facility (NSP) from October 2002 to January 2007. Total inmates attended in over 4 years:

Basic Class – 197

Advanced Class– 92

Facilitator Training – 26

Nevada inmates who have taken AVP have reported:

- Greater self-respect
- Trust in others
- Recognizing others viewpoints
- Enhanced understanding of their feelings and actions
- Perceived more choices
- Taking greater responsibility
- Resolving difficult issues by seeking positive outcomes

Only 7 workshops are scheduled for 2008 in only 1 facility (NSP)

Delaware AVP Studies

60% drop in write-ups

47% decrease in recidivism over those who had not taken AVP

5.7% of those who returned to prison were for 'violent' offenses

Ref: <http://www.avpusa.org/>, <http://www.avpusa.org/ftp/recidivismreport.pdf>, <http://renofriends.org/avp.html>,

CA vs NV

I provided my information over the phone and received an approval to attend the AVP class at a CA prison within 2 weeks. Why does it take a multipage form, a 3 month approval, and a 4 hour class that is rarely provided to be able to attend a AVP class in a NV prison?

ADVISORY COMMISSION ON ADMIN. OF JUSTICE

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AVP/California Update

Alternatives to Violence Project/California

Fall 2006

P.O. Box 3294, Santa Barbara CA 93130 800/905-6765

www.AVPCalifornia.org

An incredible year...

During the past year AVP/CA has been busy keeping up with requests for workshops in prisons and communities. Over 100 workshops have been offered, training 1,300 people inside and outside the prison walls in alternatives to violence since June 2005, and most prison AVP programs were opened in the last six months!

The open doors have come in locations where we had few if any volunteers, thus facilitators from other areas have invested tens of thousands of miles and thousands of hours of travel in these opportunities.

Over 1,000 prisoners have signed up and are waiting to take workshops.

Upon entering a prison, within a few months we develop teams of prisoner facilitators to work with the outside group. This decreases the need for outsiders to two per workshop, and with more experienced facilitators we can go with one outside Lead facilitator per workshop.

Amazing prison support...

A couple of examples of the reception we have received in the institutions we have been privileged to go into during the last year: Thirteen AVP workshops have been held at the **Sierra Conservation Center in Jamestown** since August 2005. Our thanks go to Mr. Hector Lozano and to Ms. Reggie Kramer, of SCC, who, with the backing of Warden Tony Malfi, have been responsible for the significant effort by SCC to make this possible. Our thanks also to Michael and Stephanie McCaffrey for their support in providing lodging at their lovely McCaffrey Bed and Breakfast for traveling volunteers. These workshops were facilitated by 13 different volunteers, only one of whom is local to the area.

Susanville is about eighty miles north of Reno, Nevada, east of the Sierras, in a remote northeastern section of California. There are two state prisons and one federal prison in that small town of 30,000 people. AVP has been active in two yards of **California Correctional Center (CCC)**, since December 2005, and began in **High Desert State Prison**, a maximum-security facility, in July 2006. Warden Kathy Prosper, of CCC, wholeheartedly supports AVP and works with her staff to make sure that the workshops run smoothly. Carol Polan, Assistant Manager in the Business Department, with a positive spirit, efficiently organizes all the details to make it possible to have Basic, Second Level (Advanced) and Training for Trainers (T4T) workshops.

AVP/CA is deeply appreciative of many other people at CCC, including: Assistant Deputy Warden Ron Barnes and the teachers and librarian in the education department who have assisted us through the maze of getting classrooms and supplies; guards who respond to our alarms going off accidentally, help us through locked doors, make sure we understand the rules and regulations for our safety and that of the inmates, and who are patient as we learn; and Associate Warden Tennell, whose support for the program and interest in the inmates' needs boosts the credibility of our work. Finally, we have warm gratitude for the prison staff who have housed us from time to time.

And community support for these prison programs is growing as well: In Susanville, Cheri Farrell, Founder and Director of Crossroads Ministries, a community center for the homeless, parolees and anyone else in need, is our most energetic and generous outside organizer, and we have hope of forming a local council soon that will be able to take

responsibility for the CCC and High Desert programs.

What is needed now is to bring the AVP experience to as many local people as possible so that they, too, can discover how deeply satisfying this program is.

Wealth of community workshops needing participants...

To keep the prison workshops happening, it is crucial to train community-based facilitators. Workshops are being offered on a regular basis throughout the state.

Basic

Blythe: Saturday & Sunday, September 23 & 24
Contact-Kenya Williams, 800/905-6765

Ben Lomond/Santa Cruz: September 29-October 1, Contact-www.QuakerCenter.org

Santa Barbara: October 12-14,
Contact-Sue Thorpe, yst1@earthlink.net

El Centro: Saturday & Sunday, October 28-29,
Contact-Pat Hardy, avppat@earthlink.net

La Jolla: Two Saturdays, 10/28&11/4 Contact-Gail Fuller, fullers@san.rr.com

Berkeley, November 3-5,
Contact-Katherine Youngmeister, ky@lmi.net

Advanced

Santa Rosa: September 22-24, Contact-northbayavp@yahoo.com 707/220-8269

Ben Lomond near Santa Cruz: November 3-5,
Contact-www.QuakerCenter.org

Central Coast/San Luis Obispo: Nov. 3-5,
Contact-Janet Riley, jrileypeace@sbcglobal.net

Training for Facilitators

Los Angeles/Claremont: September 9 and 10,
Contact-Judith Favor judithfavor@hotmail.com

Ben Lomond near Santa Cruz: December 1-3
Contact-www.QuakerCenter.org

Central Coast/San Luis Obispo: January 20-21,
Contact-Janet Riley, jrileypeace@sbcglobal.net

Staff training

We are making steady progress toward staff training in the prisons. The California Correctional and Peace Officers Association (the guards' union) and Chicano Correctional Workers Association have invited AVP/CA to speak at their annual meetings of union leaders. In addition, professional prison staff trainer John

Shuford will be training a group of AVP/CA facilitators this fall at staff trainers.

11 active AVP programs in CA Dept.Corr. & Rehab

San Diego- R.J. Donovan Corr. Facility
San Luis Obispo -Cal. Men's Colony
Chino - Heman G. Stark Youth Corr. Fac.
Blythe - Chuckwalla Valley SP
Jamestown - Sierra Conservation Ctr.
Susanville - Cal. Corr. Ctr.
Susanville- High Desert State Prison
Soledad - Corr. Training Facility
El Centro - Centinela S.P.
Folsom S.P.
Chowchilla - Ctrl. Cal. Women's Fac.

Continued openness in CDCR

Many of you are probably wondering if we have been affected by Jeanne Woodford's resignation earlier this year as Secretary of the Dept. of Corrections and Rehabilitation. According to administration sources, her replacement, James Tilton, seems to be staying the course of the work done by his predecessors. We continue to establish relationships with CDCR Sacramento staff, which are standing us in good stead.

Your help is needed

Developing local participation is the greatest challenge now, and it is happening slowly.

Do you know someone in any of the prison towns listed above or where workshops on your left are being offered? We need people to help locals with logistics and finding people to take the workshops. Please contact the person listed there, or Pat Hardy or George Ramos at 800/905-6765.

Pass this Update on to someone else, Please.

Statistics on AVP/CA progress since June '05 Over 100 AVP workshops!

"In a Basic workshop at the beginning go-around of the circle of participants a young man sat directly on my left. He was slouched way down, arms folded, eyes downcast, ankles crossed, sending out body language messages in every direction that this was all just a lot of baloney (he wasn't that genteel in his language!) and that all he was there for was to get the record of attendance into his files.

Two days later when we asked who was going to sign up for the next (Advanced) workshop his hand was the first to go up!"

Bob Barns, facilitator

Program teaches inmates to use alternatives to violence

Sam Williams
News Editor
swilliams@lassennews.com

Sometimes it seems as if violence lurks in every corner of our world. Maybe that can change.

Fifteen inmates at the California Correctional Center in Susanville graduated on Thursday, Nov. 15 from the 20-hour, basic Alternatives to Violence Project — a program designed to reduce violence behind prison walls and help change the behavior that led some of the men to a penal institution in the first place.

AVP, a multicultural organization of volunteers offering experiential workshops that empower individuals to lead nonviolent lives through affirmation, respect for all, community building, cooperation and trust, has offered more than 100 workshops and

trained more than 1,300 people inside and outside prison walls in California since 2005.

More than 1,000 prisoners statewide are signed up and waiting to participate in the workshops.

The program has been offered at CCC for about two years, and so far, 250 inmates have participated in the basic workshop. The program also is offered at High Desert State Prison.

Twenty inmates from CCC originally signed up to participate in the program, but two left due to a scheduling conflict, two left because they didn't want to be there (participation in the program is voluntary) and one had a medical emergency.

When AVP enters a prison, within a few months it develops a team of prisoner facilitators to work with the group, allowing the program to func-

tion with one outside lead facilitator.

The AVP began in 1975 at Green Have Prison in New York, targeting youth gang members and teenagers at risk. When the organizers had difficulty communicating their message about the consequence of violence, they turned to the Quakers — a group with a tradition of working on restorative justice — to help create a workshop for them. While the Quakers helped design the program, it is not based upon any religion.

According to a flyer describing the program, "It is a program for everybody. Though founded by Quakers, based upon their belief in an inborn power for peace in everyone, this secular workshop draws its participants and its trainers from all religions, races and walks of life."

Over the years, the program has offered thousands of workshops each year in 44 states and 24 other countries.

What the prisoners say

Not surprisingly, the biggest supporters of the program behind prison walls are the inmates themselves.

At the conclusion of the graduation ceremony, the inmates gathered in a circle to share their experiences one last time with facilitator Ann Boone.

Robert Reed, one of the participants and co-facilitator, said, "AVP is not taught in any class or school or on the streets where I come from. All this is new to me. It changed the way I want to pursue life when I leave here."

"The AVP is real," said one inmate. "I'm going to take what I've learned back to the streets with me. It showed me there are other options and better ways. I'm sick and tired of being sick and tired. The program taught me we can be human beings, and we can be people. I'm not going to lie. I'm going to bring this to the streets and try to keep others out of prison."

"Such a positive program

should be in every yard in every prison, in every jail," said another inmate. "I'm going to take the tools I learned here. It totally changed my life."

"I've been here for 2 1/2 or three years," said an inmate. "This program needs to be a constant program. This program changes you from someone you are into someone you weren't before."

"What makes this program great is that if you trust the process, it will work," an inmate said. "When we were role-playing, I saw options I've never seen before. I see the joy, and I want the joy for myself. I don't want to come back here."

"We're all prisoners," said one inmate. "We were all part of the group and no one was above the group. That really helped. Everybody treated us like human beings."

Another inmate characterized the program as "things you couldn't get out of self-help books. I realized other groups have the same problems I have."

One inmate said the program "helped me bring down some of the walls I have within myself."

"We're all trying to get out of here, and we need all the help we can get learning how to avoid conflicts."

CCC Inmate

"The program teaches you to compromise, to avoid situations," said an inmate. "We're all trying to get out of here, and we need all the help we can get learning how to avoid conflicts."

One inmate facilitator said five inmates on his dorm had been through the training and they had "almost zero tension" and therefore there was less violence on the yard

AVP offers suggestions to reduce violence

AVP's Guides to Transforming Power gives inmates suggestions designed to reduce violence.

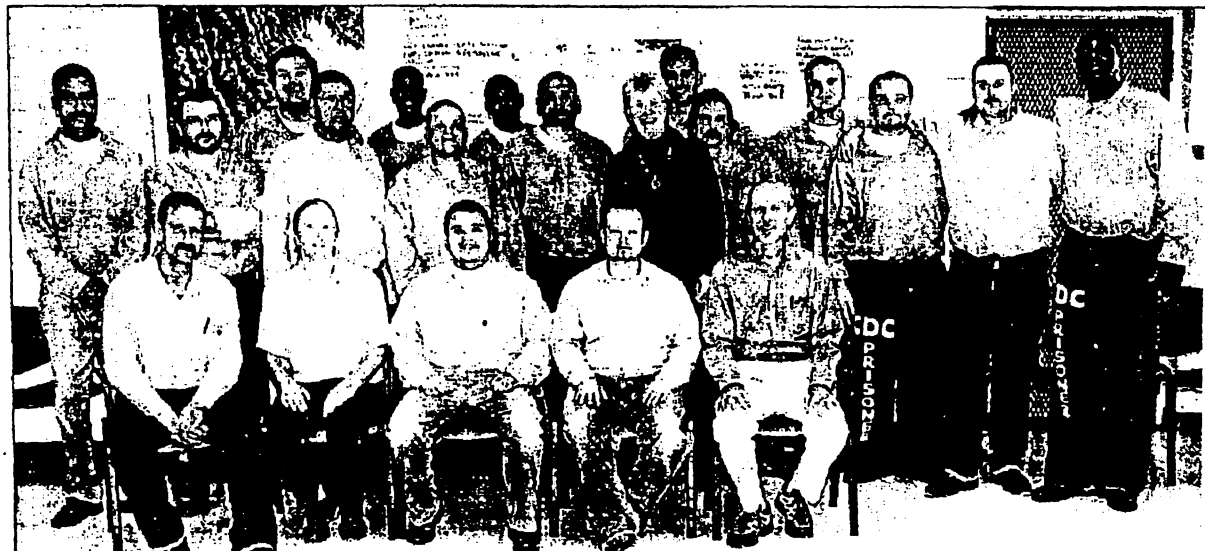
- Seek to resolve conflicts by reaching common ground.
- Be ready to revise your position if it is wrong.
- Be willing to suffer for what is important.
- Reach for that something good in others.
- Listen before making judgments.

ments.

- Use surprise and humor.
- Be patient and persistent.
- Base your position on the truth.
- Risk being creative rather than violent.
- Learn to trust your inner sense of when to act.
- Expect to experience great inward power to act.
- Build community based on honesty, respect and caring.

Thank You

The loved ones of Charles David Mankins would like to thank all of those who sent cards, flowers, donations and kind thoughts



Inmates from the California Correctional Center, facilitators and trainer Ann Boone, center, celebrate the completion of the