



“MAKING THINGS RIGHT”

June 2009

Jon Singer, Executive Director  
Ken Nissley, Case Manager  
Carol Steffy, Administrative Asst.

**IMPORTANT NOTICE!**  
**SEE PAGE 2 ABOUT THE FALL CLASS TO TRAIN VOLUNTEER FACILITATORS**

PEOPLE      ◆      POSSIBILITIES      ◆      PEACE

*Oh, This Is Why We Do This!*

Rachel Williams – Volunteer

"Terroristic threats" can be daunting. Questions race through my mind, "Can teens really be terrorists? Do they threaten classmates? Are they using meaningless words heard on TV, read in the news, books?"

When I called, A, the accused "terrorist" was most gracious and polite and readily accepted my offer to meet with him and a parent. The next day he greeted me at the door, offered a drink, and a place at the table with his mom. After the brief get-acquainted talk, I asked A to tell me what happened "that day." "In math class, we were working on a group project and the girls were not carrying their load. I held my pencil to N's throat and said: 'I could kill you.' I thought no more about it until the police came." A agreed to meet with K and N and their parents.

Meeting with K, brought a different story: "We were good friends, and in the hall N and I noticed A was acting very strange, out of character. When we got to class, he put his head on his desk and I thought he was going to cry. Then without warning he put his pencil to N's throat and said: 'I could kill you.' We both thought, A needed help. N went to her counselor and rather than work it out between us, the police were called."

(Continued on Page 2)

**NEW COLORADO LAW MANDATES OFFERING OF RESTORATIVE JUSTICE CONFERENCES TO JUVENILES**

In 1995, Pennsylvania's Juvenile Act was amended to include Balanced and Restorative Justice (BARJ). Using BARJ principles, Juvenile Probation Departments are to pay attention to Victim Restoration, Offender Accountability, and Community Protection when working with their clients. The Act is silent about Restorative Justice Conferencing between victims and offenders even though Lancaster County's Juvenile Probation Department was partnering with LAVORP prior to the passing of the BARJ Act.

Colorado's new Juvenile Justice Law (House Bill 08-1117) goes to the next level by guaranteeing the right of Restorative Justice Conferences for juveniles at every stage of the judicial process. Judges, while reading youth their other legal rights, are required to tell youth and families about the chance to participate in a restorative meeting at some point in the legal process. The advisement shall be made at the first appearance before the court, at the entry of a plea, at sentencing, and when establishing probation. The bill closes by stating, "The General Assembly hereby finds, determines and declares that this act is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health and safety." Though Restorative Justice has been practiced sporadically throughout the state, the new law puts the sanction of the legislature behind it.

Additionally, Section 2, the Bill states that the General Assembly "...declares its intent to establish a juvenile diversion program that, when possible, integrates Restorative Justice Practices to provide community-based alternatives, including victim-offender conferencing, to the formal court system that will reduce juvenile crime and recidivism, change juvenile offenders' behavior and attitudes, promote accountability, support the rights of victims, heal the harm and reduce the costs within the juvenile justice system." The goal of diverting is to prevent further involvement in the formal legal system. As the Bill does not specify that the program is for first-time offenders only (as is generally the case in Pennsylvania), it would appear that youths committing more than one offense would be eligible for the diversion program.

Unlike Pennsylvania's diversion programs that operate voluntarily in some areas (Lancaster County has Youth Aid Panels) and are not under legislative sanction, Colorado's diversion program, like the aforementioned court advisement of Restorative Justice Practices, puts the sanction of the legislature behind it.

Oh, this is Why (Cont'd)

Calling N was a challenge. Despite her dad saying she would call me, and though I called often, weeks passed and no call. However, when I used another phone, N's mom answered. It became obvious that Caller ID was working against me until the unknown number appeared.

Sunday morning was the only available day all could gather and the meeting took place in my living room. K and N told the same story of how they valued A's friendship, were concerned about his behavior and wanted him to get help. The incident was generating stories at school and they did not want to go. The friendship ended up being fractured because N pressed charges and K would not.

When A told the group about "that day," he spoke of the sorrow he felt about how he treated K and N, wanted to be forgiven and restore their relationship. He added his appreciation for N and K and their parents who had previously welcomed him into their homes. "I got the counseling I needed and learned I must be careful in my treatment of myself and others and the value of friendships."

K and N, who had been listed as victims, recognized they too were offenders - avoiding each other and letting their relationship be fractured, and not letting healing and forgiveness restore their relationship. Parents, who had heretofore welcomed the three teens in their homes, with tears glistening on their cheeks, helped to restore relationships. To shorten the beautiful unfolding story, divorced parents came together to help their son get the counseling he needed and expressed appreciation for the "coming together." When the meeting ended, and paperwork was ready for LAVORP, I saw a teen "group hug," with A, N and K hugging each other and saying: "This is what friends are for. When I think you need help, I am there for you." And, parents were giving each other thankful hugs. This is what LAVORP is all about.

***"When we help one kid do better, we're all doing better."***  
***Barb Ulmer***

### ***Does Your Congregation Support LAVORP?***

If you are a financial supporter of LAVORP, please know that we appreciate that very much and confirm that in writing each time you donate.

We know that there are many congregations in the County that believe in peace and justice. However, enough of them provide financial support for LAVORP's peace work.

If your congregation is one of them, perhaps you could bring LAVORP to the attention of the Committee responsible for community outreach. If there would be a need for input from someone at LAVORP, Jon Singer, the Executive Director, would pleased to oblige.

### ***"Do Justice-Love Mercy"***

Micah 6:8

## ***Friends of LAVORP***

"Friends of LAVORP" is composed of individuals who believe in LAVORP's Mission, but choose not to become Volunteer Facilitators.

"Friends" help with mailings, the Annual Dinner, and other events that LAVORP may have.

If being a "Friend of LAVORP" is of interest to you, please contact us at 397-2404 or by email at [lavorp@lavorp.org](mailto:lavorp@lavorp.org).

### ***NEW FACILITATORS***



Front to Back. Rachel Williams, Coach, Leslee Pope, Katie Pinkerton, Jodie Richardson, Warner Strube, Coach, Pamela Hoak, Ashley Diggs, Jay Schock, Trudi Doubleday, Galen Wine, Mike Weaver, Richard Landis, Jon Singer, E.D. Not pictured are Audrey Geissen, Mark Whitacre, Theresa Robinson and Ken Nissley, Case Manager.

On May 2<sup>nd</sup>, LAVORP completed its Spring Training Class with thirteen graduates. Leslee Pope of York took the training so that, on behalf of her employer, Manito, Inc., she can start doing victim-offender conferencing for York County Probation. We are pleased to welcome back Richard Landis who had been inactive for a period of time.

### ***2009 FALL TRAINING DATES ANNOUNCED***

If you've been putting off becoming a LAVORP Volunteer Facilitator, now is the time to mark your calendar. Dates for the Fall Training are as follows:

Tuesday, October 13th - Orientation	6:30 P.M. – 8:30 P.M.
Friday & Saturday, October 23rd & 24th	8:30 A.M. - 4:30 P.M.
Sunday, October 25th	1:00 P.M.– 5:00 P.M.
Saturday, October 31st	8:30 A.M. – 5:00 P.M.

To learn more about LAVORP's Restorative Justice Program and the benefits of becoming a volunteer, look over our web site [www.lavorp.org](http://www.lavorp.org) and click on the Volunteer Opportunity link. Then email [lavorp@lavorp.org](mailto:lavorp@lavorp.org) or call 397-2404 to arrange an appointment.

## **“LAVORP 1-2-5 Society”**

### **(Faith Partners)**

Faith partners are those businesses, individuals and congregations who have accepted our invitation to help provide a secure funding base (while we carry out our mission) by investing a minimum of \$200 per year for five years.

We are pursuing a goal of having 100 businesses, 100 congregations and 100 individuals sign on as faith partners. We'd love to have you join the group. Please see envelope included herein.

### ***Contributors***

LAVORP is grateful for the support of the following individuals, congregations, businesses, foundations, and organizations who have made contributions during the period January 27<sup>th</sup> through May 5<sup>th</sup>. Any omissions are unintentional. Please let us know and you will be included in our next newsletter.

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A Publication of LAVORP  
53 N. Duke Street – Room 303  
Lancaster PA 17602 397-2404  
lavorp@lavorp.org  
www.lavorp.org**

## Mirna Alvarado Joins Board

At its January, 2009, Board of Directors Meeting, Mirna Alvarado was elected to the LAVORP Board. In addition to her background in program development, human resources and education, Mirna represents the interests of Lancaster County’s Hispanic community. She is currently the Director of SACA’s Career Development and Training Program for adults.