



# Face To Face

The Resolution Center Newsletter

Summer 2002  
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## Meet the Staff of the Resolution Center

The work of The Resolution Center is made possible through the donated skill and labor of volunteer mediators, but we also have some paid staff in the office.

**Tamra Venator** is Director of Restorative Justice Services with Volunteers of America Alaska and directs The Resolution Center as well as the Volunteers in Probation Program and the Youth Restitution Program. She is responsible for funding development, tracking statistics, and developing relationships with referral partners. Tamra is a lifelong Alaskan and is expecting a baby this Christmas.

**Estelle Landers** works half time as Case Manager. Estelle receives case referrals, conducts pre-mediation interviews, schedules mediations, and monitors restitution agreements. Estelle lived in Memphis, Tenn. for 26 years before moving to Anchorage two years ago to be near her grandsons. In Memphis, she was a mediator and investigator for the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

**John David Thacker** also works half time as Mediation Trainer. He is responsible for recruiting, training and coordinating volunteer mediators. John David is also pastor of Prince of Peace Mennonite Church and was a volunteer victim-offender mediator before moving to Alaska in August 2001.



*The Resolution Center staff (L-R): Tamra Venator, Estelle Landers, and John David Thacker.*

## New Mediators Trained

The Resolution Center is pleased to add a new cadre of eager volunteer mediators to our rolls. Eight people completed the victim-offender mediation training held June 26-29. The training offered an introduction to the concepts of restorative justice, basic mediation skills, and the victim-offender mediation process. Over the next several months, these new mediators will be paired with experienced co-mediators as they build experience and confidence in their new roles.

The June 2002 "graduating class" includes Margaret Borman, Ann McKay Bryson, Dolly Caswell, LeAnn Chaney, Chris Dojka, Mari Ogimachi, Sharon Stuckey, and Jincy Swartzbacker. The next training will be offered this fall.

*Face To Face* is a publication of The Resolution Center, a nonprofit community-based dispute resolution resource offering victim-offender, parent-adolescent and neighborhood mediation.

# Upcoming Conference

The Victim Offender Mediation Association (VOMA) is holding its 19th Annual International Training Institute and Conference, Sept. 23-27 in Ft. Lauderdale, Fla. This year's theme is "Innovative Practices in Restorative Justice and Victim, Offender, and Community Processes."

The National Association For Community Mediation will be holding a two-day Regional Training Institute in conjunction with the VOMA conference. The theme is "Developing and Managing Community Mediation Centers."

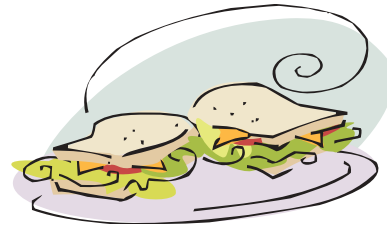
For more information, or to register, visit VOMA's web page at [www.voma.org](http://www.voma.org).

# Victims To Meet With Incarcerated Offenders

The Resolution Center, in partnership with the McLaughlin Youth Center and Victims for Justice, has initiated a pilot project to provide mediation services to institutionalized juvenile offenders nearing the end of their confinement. Offenders will be referred by McLaughlin staff members who believe they would benefit from meeting their victims before making the transition back into the community.

Victims for Justice will contact the victims, and experienced mediators from The Resolution Center will facilitate the dialogue between victim and offender. These cases will generally involve more serious crimes than we normally see in victim-offender mediation, and they will not involve restitution, which has been addressed through other channels. Rather, these dialogue sessions will focus on the human and emotional consequences of the crime.

Funding for approximately 24 such dialogue sessions a year is provided by the Community Justice Grant Program of the Division of Juvenile Justice.



# Connecting Mediators

Mediation is a great way to bring people together. A free lunch is an even greater way to bring mediators together. Fifteen volunteer mediators and Resolution Center staff met for a luncheon at the new office space in the Volunteers of America building on May 16. The event was a valuable opportunity for those connected with the center to meet one another, and the collective experience of those gathered produced many good ideas, such as this newsletter.

Look for more opportunities in the future to network, to receive additional training, and to bask in the gratitude you so richly deserve. The staff wishes to especially thank volunteer Laura Bain for the many hours she gave to coordinate this luncheon.

# Dialogue Training Offered

If you just can't get enough mediation training, the Alaska Department of Corrections is hosting a forty-hour Victim Offender Dialogue training. The instructor is Karin Ho, from the Office of Victim Services within the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction.

Victim-offender dialogue is similar to victim-offender mediation with the exception that the dialogues take place between a victim and an offender who has been imprisoned for his or her crime. Most victim-offender mediations are held before or in lieu of imprisonment and usually involve determining restitution.

The training will be offered Sept. 9-13 and is free. Space is limited. To register, contact Michael Gimm at 269-7384.

## VOMP Statistics

April 1, 2002 through June 31, 2002:

Referrals: 15

Mediations: 7

Contracts reached: 6

Volunteers contributing work: 26

Total volunteer hours: 189

Community service hours negotiated: 70

Value of restitution contracts: \$8737.58

## Community Work Service: How Much is Too Much?

Sometimes victims request that offenders work off part of their restitution agreement. The number of work hours performed to compensate a victim is often calculated by dividing the victim's financial losses by an agreed upon wage, usually the current minimum wage. Victims may also request that the offender work in the community. Determining how many hours of community work service (CWS) are appropriate is a very subjective process. If a victim suggests 250 hours, is he or she being unreasonable? How does that compare with what the offender might receive from the courts?

The Anchorage Youth Court can sentence offenders to five to 150 hours of CWS. Only in the most extreme cases do they assign anything over 100 hours. The benchmark for a felony is 40 to 48 hours and 24 to 32 hours for a misdemeanor. If the offenders we see in victim-offender mediation were to be sentenced in Youth Court, most of them would receive 20 to 40 hours. These are not strict guidelines; they merely give us a means of comparison. Thus, 250 hours seems unworkable.

It is the responsibility of the victim and offender to generate options for restitution, but informed mediators can give some guidance to that process.

## Policy Updates

As our new staff gets settled into the office, we are working to keep our policies (and our mediators) up to date.

### Restitution policy

Payments must be in cash, cashier's check, or money order—no personal checks. Cashier's checks and money orders should not be made out to the victim but to "The Resolution Center" and mailed to the office. Offenders can bring cash to the office in person. We recommend that they call ahead to make sure someone is in the office to accept payment. When we receive a payment, we record it in the offender's file and redirect it to the victim.

### Evaluations

In order to track the quality of our service, we will be using post-mediation evaluations. When mediators receive a case from Estelle, they will receive an evaluation form for the victim, the offender, and the mediators. Evaluations should be completed after the mediation agreement has been signed and before the victim and offender leave. The mediator form also has a space for volunteers to record the time donated to each case. These evaluations will alert us to areas where our program can be improved. They will also help in our reporting to grantors, referral sources and other supporters.

## To Be Continued . . .

You are holding the first issue of *Face To Face*, a quarterly newsletter for the volunteers and supporters of The Resolution Center. Through these pages we hope to deliver announcements, information and ideas that will benefit those providing dispute resolution to Alaskans.

We welcome suggestions and articles from our readers. Please let us know how we can make this newsletter serve you better.

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*the*  
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*Finding peaceful solutions for family & community problems*

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A Program of Volunteers of America Alaska



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