

The TRANSFORMER

Supporting and celebrating facilitators of AVP workshops

**Green Haven
33 Years Later**

In This Issue

Keeping AVP Alive— To Be Continued? 1

The Community Connection. 2

Transforming “Tester” to Truster 3

Steady She Goes 5

AVP’s True Value 5

Not an Easy Start 6

Not Just Another Program 6

From “Victor” to Man 6

Order Form for AVP Facilitators. . 7

The Value of Certificates 8

Custom Printed Certificates 9

Workshops in Limbo 10

Vaccination Against Violence. . . 10

AVP: Priming Other Programs. . . 11

Reflections: 10 Years Ago 12

Each issue is written by a different local group around the theme of their choosing. This issue was written essentially by prisoners at Green Haven Correctional Facility in Stormville, NY, and coordinated on the outside by Carolyn Polikarpus.

Keeping AVP Alive—To Be Continued?

By Alvaro Cumberbatch

As I write this article, it has now been 33 years and counting since a group of concerned men incarcerated at Green Haven Correctional Facility in Stormville, NY, created the foundations for what we have come to know as AVP. This program has reached many people all over New York, the country and the world. It has affected my life in a personal way.

Thanks to our Basic Manual, we all know that AVP’s first workshop was held in Green Haven, and after more than a generation, it is still alive and running. Daily I live, work and walk in the same hallways that those same concerned men lived, worked and walked. AVP to me is more than another program, it’s a way of life. Many of us apply the Transforming Power principles on a daily basis, not just in the workshop. Then there is the empowerment aspect of the program. I am convinced that the founders knew that empowerment is vital. It is rewarding to have a participant come to AVP shy, skeptical, wearing a mask and then see them become empowered enough to shed all those characteristics.

Why has it lasted?

This leads me to my main point. AVP has existed for 33 years because of many people and reasons, but the main one is this: Because it works! However, it works *through* the facilitators and participants. AVP needs people to continue the work that a handful of concerned men started many years ago. I often wonder if those men in the “think tank” knew that their ideas would still be alive 33 years later. And then I think, What can I do to ensure that their ideas are still around thirty years from now? There are so many AVP facilitators around the world who are doing just that. They are bringing AVP to communities, schools, prisons and countries that need it the most. Now imagine if that same passion lived in every AVP facilitator. Imagine if every AVP facilitator were to get five people to come to a local workshop, whether in prison or in a community. Word of mouth was how AVP spread in the beginning, and it is how it can be spread in the future. Remember, AVP was not founded by one person; therefore, it *cannot* be carried on by one person.

AVP has been blessed with passionate people—Janet Lugo, Ellen Flanders, Larry Apsey, Eddie Ellis, Theodore Haywood, Steve Angell to name just a few. The list could literally fill a book, but my point is that all these people came to AVP because they believed it was worth the sacrifice, dedication

and commitment. Their work may go unnoticed and underappreciated but they still do it. Let's all play our part to make sure that 30 years from now our names will be in those books of dedicated facilitators and that people will say the same about us that we say about the first generation of AVPers.

Kind Khalil, aka Alvaro Cumberbatch, has recently left Green Haven after serving as an extraordinary inside coordinator for several years.

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The Community Connection

By Carolyn Polikarpus

It was ironic that on the night I went to our weekly Thursday support group at Green Haven and picked up all these amazing articles, our inside coordinator was absent from our circle. He had been packed up to go to court, which was a positive move for him but a loss to our circle. The irony was that Khalil was the one who proposed the idea of doing an issue of *The Transformer* on "Green Haven 33 Years Later."

As we sat in the circle, the sense of community was very strong. We had prepared for Khalil's departure, and our new coordinator, Kay, was ready. Everyone in the circle offered to support him as he took over, and they stepped up to share the responsibility. I was so impressed at the level of commitment and dedication everyone showed toward AVP and our circle. There was a palpable sense that this is *our* program and we are invested in it going forward in the best way possible.

On my drive home, I reflected on this community of which I am a part. It is always in flux. Men join the circle as apprentices or transfers in. They leave when they are released (always a time for celebration) or transferred or because they fall away, for whatever reason. But the community is like glass—both solid and liquid, always changing, but strong, resilient and flexible. I can see it stretch back to that first AVP group in 1975.

Then an image came to me. Years ago when I worked in Manhattan there was a fire in our office building. We were on the 43rd floor and had to evacuate down the stairwell. For some reason there were no lights in the stairwell; the only light came from the open doors at each floor. All of us formed a human chain, holding hands as we went down those many flights. At each floor we met other people, and we just opened our chain and let them in. Flight by flight we went down, hand in hand, linked from the top all the way down, opening and adding and then, as we reached the ground floor, moving on. Our AVP community reminded me of this last night; taking in, sharing and giving support and enthusiasm and then letting go and moving on. Our human chain connects us all the way back to our beginnings in J-School in 1975, and we are paying it forward to the next generation.

Courageous Carolyn, aka Carolyn Polikarpus, has been blessed to be a facilitator at GH for 12 years and the outside coordinator for seven years.

Margaret Steiner, a long-time AVP facilitator, died on March 10 after a long illness. Margaret was instrumental in helping to launch AVP in Indiana in 2004.

-Stanley Zarowin

Transforming “Tester” to Truster

By Alvin Entzminger

My first experience with AVP was in the spring of 1981—right here at Green Haven prison. Along with a dozen other inmates, I was scheduled to take my Basic workshop. As we walked into a tiny back room in the Protestant Center, the very same room where the Think Tank sat six years earlier, I was a little bit nervous because I didn’t know what to expect. After about fifteen minutes of anticipation, the three civilian volunteers who would facilitate the workshop walked into the room: Larry Apsey, Ellen Flanders and Mary Gray Legg.

Larry Apsey calls my bluff and trusts

The first day of the workshop was fun and interesting to say the least. I need to mention that I (Amazing Al at the time) was like the workshop jokester—always looking for a laugh, even at the risk of being disruptive. I don’t think I was too hard on the facilitating team that first day of the workshop, but I’m sure my antics were the topic of discussion in a closed clinic or two. They probably went home that evening wondering what Saturday would bring. Surely, I planned to be up and ready for the challenge.

Prior to the facilitating team coming in on Saturday morning, I had warned the group how I was going to show them that this AVP thing was a joke and that the civilians don’t believe in it themselves. I didn’t know how I was going to prove this, but I just knew that I could somehow make the team fold under pressure.

It came to me as Larry was doing the agenda preview for the day. He was saying that we were going to do this gathering and then go on to this thing and then that thing, etc. I winked at the group and said to the men on either side of me, “Watch this.” Jumping up and questioning Larry, I said in a very loud voice, “Yo, what do you mean we’re gonna do this and do that. Why not ask the group what it is we would like to do?” Larry, very calm and serene, appeared to be rolling my every word around in his mouth, tasting every letter and syllable. After about twenty seconds or so, he simply smiled at me and proceeded to hand me a marker and a piece of newsprint. Larry said, “All right, Al, that’s a good idea. Now how about showing us what it is that you and the group would like to do.” Wow, I thought to myself. He wasn’t supposed to say

that. He was supposed to get scared and fold under pressure. All of a sudden, it began to feel like 200 degrees in the room. In a matter of seconds, I went from a smiling jokester to the dude who just wanted to disappear. In my attempt to save face I smiled back and said, “C’mon man, I’m just kiddin’. Go on and do your thing.”

As the workshop continued without a hitch, I went away that evening wondering to myself, what the hell happened there? Later I’d understand that it was Transforming Power that happened, and, yes, I became an instant believer.

Little did I know then, I would go on to take the next two levels of AVP and become an apprentice facilitator. As I began to get the experience of more and more workshops under my belt, the AVP principles and philosophy became like second nature to me. I can remember a younger facilitator saying to me one day, “Gee Al, you are so very attuned to what is needed in the workshop.” From that day forward, Amazing Al became Attuned Al.

I trust the group

In all my years of facilitating at Green Haven and other facilities, I have so many favorable and fond memories of AVP that they are just too numerous to mention. However, one is so very special and it gives me great pleasure to be able to relive that experience with you now.

It was in 2002, about 21 years after my awakening experience with Larry Apsey. At age 52, I was no longer the workshop jokester. I was older, wiser and graying. I always seem to feel that Larry and all the great beings live in my heart as I facilitate. At any rate, this Basic workshop of 2002 was one that I have always considered to be a very tough group.

From the beginning, we facilitators had our collective hands full. We had to continuously break up the obvious cliques . . . steadily remind the men of the ground rules . . . and on and on and on.

At one point in the workshop, an argument erupted. It was just short of being physical. As we sat, watching, waiting for just the right moment to interject, a group of four boisterous men stood up and began walking very aggressively toward the one

individual with whom they were arguing. With only a few more paces to go before they were right upon the other participant, I had to make the quintessential quick decision.

Just like 21 years ago, I jumped to my feet and raised my voice, but with a whole different intent this time. Everyone was startled, and the focus was now on me. I walked to the wall and snatched our agenda down. "This is real," I said. "It's not a scripted role play and it surely ain't on the agenda. As a matter of fact, we no longer have an agenda for the day because this arguing is it. At this moment, everything I believe in is on the line. We're gonna see if this AVP thing works or if we're all here just taking up space. Take your seats, men, and let's see what's going on here." Wow, I thought to myself, as each man took his seat.

The open floor discussion was good, and the Fish-bowl later proved to be just what we needed. Afterward, the workshop continued unimpeded. Toward the end of the evening, one of the main players of that confrontation came to me and said, "Old timer, I don't know what it was you did earlier today, but that was some real slick stuff you pulled." Smiling, I

said, "I didn't do anything other than to trust in the process of AVP. It was you and all of your friends who actually allowed the process to work . . . so it is I who thank all of you."

All of the five men in the above confrontation went on to become facilitators themselves. On more than one occasion, I have heard at least two of them tell this story in their TP Rap. What a difference a day (or workshop) makes when we simply trust the process.

AVP—Green Haven—33 years later

Surely, much has changed since a group of men of the Think Tank sat down with some Quakers to get it all started—new faces, new countries, new exercises and revisions. In all of this, Transforming Power is still Transforming Power and the process will forever work if we only allow it.

Peace to my AVP family

Then—there—here and now.

Attuned Al, aka Alvin Entzinger, is our professor emeritus of attuned wisdom and transforming power.

May 23–26, 2008 Annual Gathering

Late-breaking news

See more detailed and up-to-the-minute Conference information at: www.avpusa.org/annual08.htm. Read about the plenary presenters, the Conference agenda, the site and the area, get driving instructions, the weather forecast, and more.

Workshop proposals still eagerly sought

Send your ideas right away to Jan Krouskop (e-mail Jan@Krouskop.net or call (360) 527-3545).

Register NOW!

Scholarship deadline is April 25, but scholarships are first-come-first served. Apply while funds are still available. If you are an ex-inmate but don't have travel permission yet, send in your application NOW and indicate that problem on the form.

Need registration/scholarship forms? You can get them online at www.avpusa.org/annual08.htm or call Rick at (360) 527-3545.

The Future Is Now!



Jakada Imani,
Friday Keynote
Speaker



The Firs

Steady She Goes

By Matthew McCain

I was first introduced to AVP in the summer of 2002 by a counselor. She said she believed it would be a good idea for me to participate. Unfortunately, I never attended that year. It wasn't until January of 2007 that I was approached again with the prospect of becoming truly involved. So I signed up to attend my first workshop with no real expectation.

My Basic workshop was at Green Haven in March 2007. It was then that I knew that AVP was for me. The facilitators laid out a springboard for the participants to let our values, ethics and humanity show. I had been able to grow up a little more due to experience (I'm only 25 years old). Only two months later I was able to attend the Second Level workshop. I didn't understand the process at first, so when it began to "appear" to go downhill—a little resistance from the participants—I felt torn. I knew what the participants were saying—they wanted more of the Basic. The facilitators stood by and watched; I thought they had no idea what to do next. However, we began the consensus process and the next session and the ones following simply took off. It wasn't until later—after becoming a facilitator—that I realized exactly what went wrong. ABSOLUTELY NOTHING! The facilitators recognized the process at work and let it go on.

Now I know exactly why the process works—because AVP doesn't pretend to have the answers. We don't commit to therapy. All the answers are before and within each person, and many of the exercises help us reach the answers we're looking for. Once participants realize the process actually worked for them, they become eager to help others see the same.

I think occasionally about what is the most difficult thing about keeping AVP alive. The only thing that comes to mind is getting guys to come in. Well, after 33 years, it's still one of the best parts, as well as the easy part. She's still going steady.

Kind Kay, aka Matthew McCain, has recently taken on the inside coordinator responsibilities at Green Haven.

Thank You

A very special thank you to the men in Green Haven Correctional Facility and Carolyn Polikarpus for stepping in quickly and writing copy at the last minute when illness prevented another group from being included. This rush did not affect the quality of their writing and what was presented to the Transformer Team. As you can see, they wrote a beautiful, relevant issue.

AVP's True Value

By William King

In the fifth and sixth years of my incarceration, I completed Basic and Advanced workshops in AVP. It would be another twelve years before I took the next workshop to become a facilitator.

At the beginning of 1994, I graduated from college and began a relatively high-paying job in Corcraft. A couple of months later I moved into the prison's Honor Block. A couple of months after that I completed my Basic workshop.

So many positive things were happening in my life in such a rapid fashion that I couldn't discern what was truly important.

It wasn't until a couple of years ago—when I honestly began to appraise my life—that I realized the true value of AVP.

Life's not about differences, it's about commonalities. So many people get caught up in gender, race, nationality, age, religion, ethnicity, wealth, education and politics that they forget that underneath all of that the fact remains that we're all people. We all have value and we all count.

AVP teaches us to recognize one another's humanity. What could be more important?

Kind King, aka William King, is a new facilitator who brings warmth and wisdom to every workshop.

Not an Easy Start

By Maurice Poblah

My becoming a part of the AVP family wasn't an easy journey. On several occasions I refused to accept anything the workshop had to offer because I perceived it as just another futile jailhouse program. Thus, my first brush with an AVP workshop was in 2005. I finally agreed to participate after being persuaded by a brother and dear friend. Thereafter I realized the importance of AVP, not only in my life, but also to the entire human race. What further experience do we need as a people before we realize that violence is detrimental to our common good and ultimately to humanity? Thank you AVP.

Amazing Africa, aka Maurice Poblah, is an active facilitator and sage at Green Haven.

Not Just Another Program

By Gary Riley

When I first came to AVP in 1989, I thought it was just "another" program. I took the Basic workshop while incarcerated at Green Haven and came for the certificate to take to the board. I learned in that Basic workshop that Green Haven is the birthplace of AVP. I spent six years in Green Haven and came to look at AVP in a whole different way. I became a facilitator and went on to facilitate many workshops over those six years, as well as become part of the leadership team. After being released and doing AVP all over New York and other places around the U.S., I have come to develop a whole new appreciation for Green Haven AVP.

While in Green Haven, my entire AVP frame of reference was behind the walls. Sure, folks came in from the outside, but they were outsiders (because they could leave at the end of the day). Once released, I was introduced to AVP area councils: AVP New York, AVP USA, and AVP International. I began to truly see just how important AVP Green Haven has been. Just to think that from behind those dark and dreaded walls has sprung a program that has world-wide significance is incredible. My AVP experience, to me, is more meaningful and rewarding knowing that I was weaned, crawled and took my first steps in the AVP program at its birthplace.

Grandpa Gary, aka Gary Riley, was AVP-NY President until moving to Georgia last year.

From "Victor" to Man

By Cedric Turner

The words you are about to read come from a man who was once haunted—haunted by the negative way that a prisoner could sometimes live. I would be the victor and never the victim in this negative way of living. I swore I would never allow someone else to act out on me. These parasitic behaviors that we glorify—the cuttings, stabbings, extortion, sexual indulgences, etc.—I know that these are some of the end results. But what causes these behaviors?

The main cause of these parasitic behaviors is our separation; the separation that we so readily create among ourselves. This separation breeds envy, jealousy, etc. I speak of the separate TVs, workout courts, tables, all of which lead us into separate ways of thinking, violent thinking, thinking that becomes alive in our actions, the same actions that I mentioned above. We have separated ourselves for so long that we have become strangers to each other, making enemies out of ourselves.

Since attending AVP, I no longer think about the violence I can attribute to our circular life. I now think about the solution. AVP gave me an alternative to becoming violent. It taught me how to be able to think individually for the betterment of the whole population.

But this new way of thinking didn't happen overnight. It happened in stages. Friday was the day of ice breaking and community building. Saturday was the day to reflect back on Friday, our "clam day," when we were so closed from each other but slowly, with the help of the facilitators, we started to open up, similar to a clam opening. On Saturday we laughed and remembered how silly we were toward each other on Friday. Sunday we searched deeply for something dear to us so that we could have something to share with our new family members. Sunday was also the day we graduated together as a family.

Since the end of that three-day program, which was needed for the transformation, I no longer have to challenge my own manhood in order to feel like a man.

Generous General, aka Cedric Turner, has been bringing his wisdom to facilitating for several years.



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The Value of Certificates

By Alan Taplow

When responding to a request on AVP-L, it occurred to me that sharing some thoughts about certificates may result in a higher degree of uniformity throughout the country and give others a few new ideas.

Many of us have provided certificates to participants at all workshop levels as well-deserved recognition of their attendance and work together. Certainly the gold certificate many groups present as evidence that facilitators have satisfactorily completed their apprenticeship is a highly valued symbol of achievement. I've found that certificates presented at the end of a workshop are appreciated recognition of the work a participant has done and are tangible symbols that let others know about their achievement and about AVP.

Have you ever been to a workshop where, at the last minute on your way out, you hand in your evaluation and pick up a certificate from a pile on the table, where you are supposed to write in your own name when you get home? Tacky, tacky, tacky!

When I started doing AVP, I vowed never to treat participants who have given up a weekend of their time in that manner. I've always tried to give an attractive recognition certificate in all my workshops—even laser printing the name instead of just writing it in whenever I did a workshop where I was home on a Saturday night before the completion of the workshop and had access to my printer. With a little extra effort, we can present a higher image of the professionalism of AVP by having a little ceremony at the end of our workshops and presenting something attractive to our participants.

As I've been custom printing certificates for the past nine years, I've noticed the following most common patterns.

- At each workshop level certificates tend to be the same except for color of border and wording after the participant's name.
- Most start with centered wording (See example at end of this article).
- Here is the typical progression of certificates that many groups use:

Basic: (typically green border) For those who have satisfactorily completed the Basic Course in Nonviolent Conflict Resolution

Advanced (or Second Level) (typically blue border) For those who have satisfactorily completed the Second Level Course (or Advanced) in Nonviolent Conflict Resolution

Training for Facilitators (typically red border) For those who have satisfactorily completed the Facilitator's Course in Nonviolent Conflict Resolution

Fully Certified (typically gold border) For those who have satisfactorily performed as Apprentice Facilitators and are fully certified as AVP Facilitators

Inside Facilitator (given after each workshop facilitated) (typically red border) For those who have participated as a Facilitators in a Workshop in Nonviolent Conflict Resolution

- This is the typical wording on the back of certificates:

The Alternatives to Violence Project, Inc. is an organization of dedicated volunteers who help people develop effective ways of dealing with conflicts creatively and without violence. Its courses are offered only to voluntary participants. Each course consists of an 18- to 22-hour intensive program of exercises and discussions designed to develop self-esteem and self-confidence in a trusting and supportive atmosphere, which creates a sense of community. The courses teach principles of cooperation with co-workers, skills of listening, speaking and observing, and explore the many nonviolent solutions that are possible in almost every conflict when approached with a caring attitude toward others.

Where to find bordered paper

Certificate paper may be purchased at local office supply stores or print shops; however, the range of colors is often limited and the prices tend to be high. During the past nine years I've been getting my certificate paper from

The Trainer's Warehouse

89 Washington Avenue

Natick, MA 01760

Phone: (800) 299-3770

E-mail: www.trainerswarehouse.com

I've been ordering their CP460, which comes with blue, green, red and gold borders. If you contact me (Alan Taplow, 844 John Fowler Road, Plainfield VT 05667, 802-454-4675, ataplow@vtlink.net), I'll be happy to supply PDF files of the layouts, so you can just print them out on either a laser or inkjet printer.

Care and handling

Of course, keeping close track of certificates is the responsibility of the outside coordinator. AVP certificates often have value as currency on the inside and have been used as such at some facilities. Consider bringing them into the prison filled out on the day of graduation: Don't leave them in the inside box even if it is locked.

Uniformity

There is currently little uniformity among AVP councils. Some groups do not give certificates. Others present letters of participation. Still others have a very well-defined set of certificates with different color borders designating the various workshop levels. While I would hope this article encourages a higher degree of uniformity within AVP/USA, being at heart a wee bit of an anarchist, I would never want the imposition of a mandated standard. So all of the above is just meant for thought and discussion among the AVP/USA local, state and regional councils.

Certificate	
Workshops for Training in Nonviolence	
Alternatives to Violence Project / (name of local or state council or locations)	
Awards this Certificate to	
_____ (NAME) _____	
Who has satisfactorily completed: (See page 8 for wording for each level.)	
_____	_____
Facilitators:	Date:

Alan Taplow is a long-time facilitator and the AVP/USA Data Base Coordinator, who operated the Distribution Center until last year.

Custom Printed Certificates

In the past, Alan Taplow has provided customized, printed certificates and brochures to many local and statewide groups. Alan will be discontinuing this printing service by the end of 2008. If you have been getting your workshop completion certificates from Alan he will be happy to supply you with a PDF file of the layouts he is currently using for your group. That way, you can print your own on either a laser or inkjet printer or, if you wish, have them printed by a copy center.

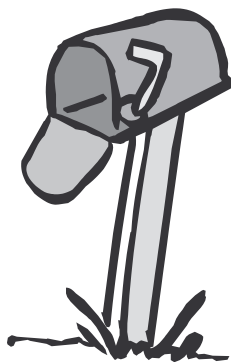
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Moving?

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Are you an artist?

Would you like to see your work in *The Transformer*? Check out future issue themes for ideas, or just draw what AVP means to you. We might be able to find a spot for it in an upcoming newsletter. Send it to

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Subscribe to the "L" free

National AVP-L email list is created for AVP facilitators to share questions and provide answers on facilitating AVP workshops.

To subscribe, send an e-mail message indicating where and when you obtained your AVP facilitator certification, where you currently train, and any other pertinent information you care to include to Peter Hoover, prh4@cornell.edu, the list owner.

Workshops in Limbo

By Michael T. McCloskey

“What’s the use? I just don’t see the reason to come to meetings when there are no workshops. Call me when they start again.”

I got this response when I asked one facilitator his reason for missing monthly AVP training meetings. In the past, he was energetic, dependable and committed to the program. However, now, as we were several months into a furlough of no workshops, he was losing interest.

A few months prior we were told by a prison administrator that monthly workshops would be “postponed” indefinitely because of staff shortages. Up until this point, two to three AVP workshops were conducted monthly at DCC. We had even begun conducting workshops in the prison’s maximum security section (at the request of the Warden). The program was thriving and had the commitment of 29 resident facilitators and 10 community facilitators.

Now, with the future uncertain, lead trainers considered the present. Most other programs in the prison had switched to an every-other-week schedule as administrators worked to manage staffing shortages. Many of the staff were tired of working double shifts.

Through it all, we were permitted to continue our monthly training meetings. Lead trainers discussed ways to keep everyone motivated. “Everyone needs to practice exercises,” one man volunteered. “We need to keep meetings interesting and energized,” said another. And so we did.

Of the 29 facilitators at DCC, eight were new trainees, eight more were lead trainers and the rest had two to eight years of experience. For the trainees, their training took place right before workshops were stopped and they had yet to facilitate their first workshop.

Lead trainers worked to teach the trainees Basic exercises while maintaining interest in the more senior facilitators. A format of mixing the training meetings with an offering of Basic and Advanced exercises was adopted. The Basic exercises allowed the trainees to gain needed experience. The Advanced exercises gave both the trainees and senior facilitators experience in learning new skills. Everyone gained even in the absence of workshops.

During the lull in workshops, which has now stretched to 28 months, the monthly training meetings

became the glue that held the team together. Facilitators expressed desires to connect to one another even without conducting workshops. Everyone found common ground at the meetings as we practiced exercises.

As we did in workshops, we strived to keep the meetings interesting and fun. We challenged the team to try out new or different Light & Livelies. We also attempted exercises no one had yet experienced.

The two-hour training meetings became our “oases in the desert,” a place for facilitators to maintain community and connect with others they seldom saw. It was a place to rest and drink from a well of knowledge provided by the entire team.

We do not know when workshops will again become a natural part of prison life and something that men look forward to each month. What we do know is that, whenever we are given approval, we will be prepared.

Mike McCloskey, inmate coordinator of AVP at the Delaware Correctional Center in Smyrna, Delaware, since the program’s inception in 1992, has developed an excellent support team of Lead Trainers who have led the AVP program through several periods of forced inactivity, the longest of which is described in this article.

Vaccination Against Violence

By Andre Green

I’d like to share my feelings on AVP and explain how it has helped me. It has given me a new perspective on how to deal with stressful situations that could potentially lead to violence. I believe that AVP is for everyone, and it should be administered to all—sort of like vaccinations or medicine—regardless of age, race, culture, religion, ideology or political views. Bottom line? AVP works! And I’m not just a participant; I’m also a facilitator.

I’m going to drive my point home by using two sayings most people know: 1) Proper preparation prevents poor performance, and 2) People don’t plan to fail, they fail to plan.

I’ve always applied these sayings to education, career, goals, war or just getting the job done. However, AVP uses these jewels to change perception under the influence of anger, with skillful workshops that are fun, humorous and, yet, serious. AVP exercises teach skills that are important because they can

be used to defuse a hostile situation that could lead to violence and unwanted and unnecessary trouble. And prison can be the epitome of a hostile environment; therefore, what better place to use AVP skills?

I have also met some great people with the same mindset of “the violence must stop!” And with that said, I’m happy to be on the team, the AVP team.

Great Green, aka Andre Green, is a Green Haven facilitator.

AVP: Priming Other Programs

By Paul S. Kim

We are at the beginning of 2008 and even 30 years after its conception, AVP at Green Haven (GH) continues to make strides toward helping prisoners transform their lives in the midst of a violent atmosphere. Due to the strengths of AVP’s workshop design, it has also come to serve as a starting point for other programs. One undertaking in particular that demonstrates the dynamic diversity of AVP is the integration of AVP principles in conjunction with the Certificate in Ministry and Human Services (CMHS).

CMHS is a one-year, college-level, prison theology program sponsored by Rising Hope, a nonprofit organization. Initially the reason CMHS wanted their students to experience AVP was to help them get acquainted with one another and establish a community prior to their first semester and the year they would spend together.

Many challenges arose in the planning for this project. Not only was it the first of its kind, but also many of the students participating in CMHS—but not all—had already experienced AVP, either as participants or facilitators. So how were we to plan a workshop that was not a traditional AVP workshop? How could we cater to all—those who had participated in an AVP workshop, the CMHS facilitators and those who had no exposure to AVP? The answer was to put together the best we could with the best minds AVP had to offer.

When I was asked to help facilitate the workshop, I was honored to be selected. My experience as a graduate of CMHS probably contributed to my selection. But I was a bit skeptical how it would turn out. Three

fellow facilitators—all graduates of CMHS—and I were charged with creating a template for the new workshop.

Meshing Two Programs

We knew from the beginning that we would have to tailor the workshop for the certificate program’s special needs. As former CMHS students ourselves, we believed the most vital areas of concentration were community, ethics, responsibility, education and, of course, transforming power. The sessions we created reflected those areas with exercises for those purposes. For example, each session had the name of a great thinker, teacher or mover from history such as Plato, Jesus, Mohammed, Kant or Hegel. An explanation of each historical figure was presented at the beginning of the session named after him. For ethics we used scenarios such as cheating on exams, plagiarism, and ostracizing other students to get across our message. For education we held an academic challenge that focused on what a true debate and argument is (to be open-minded and always keep the dialogue open); a question-and-answer challenge with subjects from natural science, social sciences and religion. We ended the workshop with a group project that allowed each group to teach some topic of interest to their classmates.

Was our endeavor successful? I believe so. Some have declared that we went beyond their expectations, and I hope we did. During the weekend we were together, we not only built a community of brothers, we also gave them the tools they needed to be successful in their education and in their daily walk. We later learned that the AVP experience was vital to the year they spent together. Through personal experience I could say that it gets difficult dealing with 20 individual personalities in an academic setting—for five nights a week, at that. I guess we did something good after all because here it is 2008 and we are preparing to do our third CMHS workshop.

I would say that, at Green Haven, AVP is always being challenged to be better than it was yesterday. To every call or challenge we say this: Bring your best and we will bring ours.

Sagacious Sky, aka Paul S. Kim, is a very seasoned and creative young facilitator at Green Haven.

Reflections: 10 Years Ago

By Don Goodman

A rich flood of memories comes from the years of going into Green Haven Correctional Facility regularly for AVP workshops. It is an odd focus for reflection on a penitentiary, but hospitality is the theme that comes to mind. When Margo and I entered Green Haven for our first workshop, we pleaded innocent, having done only a Basic and a T for F, and both on the outside. But there was a need for some outsiders for the scheduled workshop, and they got two outsiders.

The men took us in and taught us the ropes and more. In those years the meals were brought in and served by the men (years later the men would have to return to the mess hall breaking up the rhythm of the program), so there was considerable time to socialize and plan. A first major event was a 20th anniversary “celebration,” with Larry Apsey and many former prisoners returning for a rare revisit. Those on the inside had really worked with staff to prepare a wonderful meal and warm hospitality, graciously accepted. Everyone—the prisoners, the visitors, the staff, administration and the superintendent—had the sense that something special, even unique and lasting, was being acknowledged and celebrated.

It seems every few months someone came from afar, almost on a pilgrimage, from Europe and many states where AVP was developing. The men were especially struck by a visit from some wonderful facilitators from New Zealand. One insider told the group he had looked up New Zealand the night before, and it was really far away. There was a sense of connection in a place where connections are so often denied.

In our lives, that spirit of connecting spilled over into the Peace Project, an AVP program that Margo started, with a little help from me (and often with the help of former prisoners) in a middle school on Long Island that continues to grow.

Daring Don, aka Don Goodman, was outside coordinator at Green Haven from 1994–2001.

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“Transforming Power”
 By Nebraska facilitators
 Coordinator: Marian Klosterman

Fall 2008

“Empathy”
 By Mr. and Mrs. John Shuford

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