



The  
**TRANSFORMER**

Supporting and Celebrating the Facilitators of AVP Workshops

**Winter 2010: Youth 2**

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*Articles for this issue were compiled by the AVP/USA Youth Committee.*

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**Editorial - The Babies Are Drowning!**

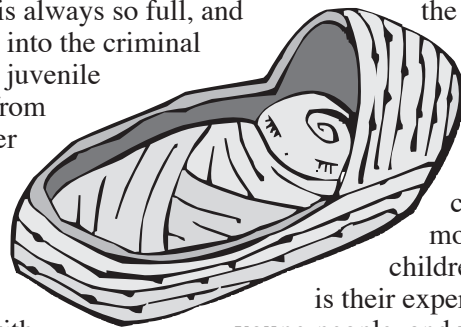
*By Jubilant Judy*

**Y**ou have probably heard this story before. A woman is walking in the forest, and she sees people frantically pulling baskets from a rushing river. As she draws closer, she sees that the baskets contain tiny babies. She quickly joins in helping to rescue the boys and girls, wrapping them in warm blankets. But soon she stops and walks away – the people call out to her in distress. “Where are you going? We need you.” “I am going up the river to find out who is throwing the babies in the water!”

The story is told to illustrate that some people will choose to perform acts of caring and compassion while others will seek out the root of the injustices that overwhelm us. Both, of course, are important – we cannot leave the babies to drown, but someone has to go upstream.

When I consider the story in relation to AVP, the river represents a relentless criminal justice system with dark and dangerous currents fed by poverty, underfunded education and a mainstream culture of media violence. In creating AVP at Green Haven, we were responding to a crisis, a request to help with the violent situation in the prison. With the offer of Transforming Power, we made quiet pools where the people who were incarcerated could rest a while and then swim with more confidence to shore. As AVP volunteers, we have continued to provide these transformative workshops.

Yet the river is always so full, and a watery journey into the criminal with a baptism in juvenile by a suspension from of the mighty river community to around our the flow---to and pull the violence that look to do AVP with



the undertow so powerful! justice system can start detention or be launched school. The tributaries reach far back into the wrap their icy fingers children. We long to stem move upstream and intervene children from the river of is their experience of life. Thus, we

young people, and we work hard to find ways to bring the AVP process to places where young people can encounter Transforming Power in ways which are consistent with the AVP model. In this edition of The Transformer we share with you some of our joys and struggles as we walk this path.

The original story of the woman walking in the forest reminds me that we are also called to look for the sources of injustice in our society. While pulling our children from the river is vital, we must take action to make the river a less dangerous place—off-limits where possible—to truly make a difference. As advocates for young people, we are well placed to recognize the forces at work which criminalize them. Our voices are important as we speak out and support change to keep our children on dry land. We also can rejoice that the AVP process gives us a way to empower ALL young people to be the next generation of leaders, using Transforming Power in life-enhancing ways.

*Jubilant Judy is Co-Clerk of the AVP-USA Youth Committee. She is grateful to fellow members of the committee for their input to this editorial.*

# The TRANSFORMER

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## Refugee youth and AVP

By Jubilant John

The International Rescue Committee provides opportunities for refugees to thrive in America. Each year, thousands of refugees are invited by the U.S. government to seek safety and freedom. Forced to flee conflict or persecution, many have survived for years against incredible odds. They step off the plane with next to nothing but their dignity, hope and determination. In San Diego and many other regional offices across the country, the IRC helps them rebuild their lives. Jubilant John describes a developing relationship between AVP and the IRC in San Diego, CA.

One of the challenges facing AVP facilitators with a passion for youth work is gaining access to young people. Success stories can begin when an adult youth worker encounters AVP through mini-workshops, and that was how Giving Gabriel (Gabe), the Volunteer and Outreach Coordinator for the International Rescue Committee (IRC) in San Diego, California, first learned about AVP. The mini-Basic workshop, sponsored by the IRC, was held for immigrant teenagers from Somalia, Burma, Liberia and Sudan in the summer of 2009. While the workshop wasn't particularly successful, due to the very limited English language skills of the participants, Gabe, who was attending as a volunteer and looking for a job with the IRC, became interested in the AVP program. Gabe soon joined the IRC staff and began developing a student "Ambassador" program for the IRC. Throughout the 2009-2010 school year, he recruited 50 high school students from private and public high schools in the San Diego area who were interested in refugee issues and wanted to learn firsthand about the challenges and successes of the growing number of refugees who are finding homes in San Diego. These student Ambassadors committed to a five-week summer program in which they met and developed relationships with teenage refugees and learned about the IRC's local

work in resettlement, immigration services, financial and educational assistance and access to health and nutrition and attended presentations by other local nonprofit agencies working directly with refugees and local community leaders. The Ambassadors, in two groups (one of 30 and one of 20), met for four hours, three days per week, in the IRC facility for presentations or at local beaches for social activities as well as volunteering before class in setting up apartments for newly arriving refugees, grocery shopping, tutoring English and other subjects at a nearby high school and gleaning for the food pantry.

Following his initial introduction to AVP and the establishment of the Ambassador program, Gabe attended a Basic AVP workshop at Donovan Correctional Facility in May. Gabe realized that the Ambassadors and refugee students could benefit from the experiences of an AVP workshop, so he contacted Jubilant John from Hands of Peace (the AVP local group) in San Diego.

Gabe proposed that AVP activities would be included in the Ambassador program, with a schedule of five two-hour blocks for each of the groups. His goals for the AVP blocks included team and community building and developing communication skills and ways to resolve conflicts non-violently, with the knowledge that the Ambassadors saw themselves as leaders in their schools.

John was delighted at the prospect of working with such a select population of bright and talented teenagers. At first, the Ambassadors and refugee students wondered about where the AVP segments were going but quickly became comfortable and engaged with the gatherings, light and livelier and interactive exercises. At the end of the first group's sessions, the participants were generally positive about





## Project LAUNCH – Bringing College and High School Students Together in Lancaster, PA

By Melodious Marissa

their experiences in their written evaluations.

When the Ambassadors return to their schools this fall, Gabe has plans for them to establish Club IRC's that will enhance awareness of refugee issues and the impact that violence has on our global community. We, in Hands of Peace, also are looking forward to hearing about the effects that their AVP experiences have had on them and on their peers.

What are the lessons from our collaboration with the IRC?

- Identify and encourage adults (with connections to youth groups) to participate in AVP workshops—even in a mini-workshop of 2.5 to 3 hours. (Be ready to conduct such workshops!)
- Learn about the youth group's goals and programs. Show how an AVP workshop experience could tie into the youth group's own training, expanding the goals and value of the group's training.
- Our AVP work is often unknown or marginalized to the criminal justice system. It helps if we introduce our goals in positive and relevant terms. Consider describing the goals of AVP youth workshops to include:
  - Developing team participation skills and community-building relationships
  - Developing communication skills
  - Learning strategies to de-escalate the level of conflicts while enhancing personal relationships

Learn more about the work of The International Rescue Committee at [www.theirc.org](http://www.theirc.org).

*Jubilant John is a Coordinator with Hands of Peace in San Diego, CA ([sandiegoavp@yahoo.com](mailto:sandiegoavp@yahoo.com)).*

In my experience, people are afraid of the word “peace.” It’s a construct we all strive for, a concept we all embrace as ideal; and yet when I claim it as a “truth,” people look at me incredulously as if to say either, “Yeah, right; that can never work” or “Oh no, what are you going to do to make me change?” For me, it’s that last question that fuels the work that I do.

Early in the summer of 2009, as a college senior, I began exploring the idea of bringing AVP to Franklin and Marshall College (F&M) in Lancaster, PA. I had this grand notion it might be possible to bring F&M and Lancaster youth together and put them through both Basic and Advanced workshops over the course of four rigorous days. For anyone who has been through an AVP workshop, you understand that this was a very ambitious goal. Nonetheless, by August, the Ware Institute for Civic Engagement (an on-campus department that prepares students to take responsibility for their communities, their government and our global society) had bought into the idea, and the programming was firmly in place. By September it had been accomplished, and the worlds of ten high schoolers and ten college students intersected to form a new AVP community.

The verdict: the students loved being together, learned so much from each other and took a lot out of the workshop sessions, but they could not buy into the “always seek a nonviolent path” segment of the AVP mandala. Considering that this is a fundamental component of AVP, I knew the program wasn’t going to go far on campus unless I took a fresh look at what parts of the program did work for the students. I went back to the drawing board and formed Project LAUNCH.

Project LAUNCH is a ground-up operation that includes mentorship, leadership, friendship, stewardship, scholarship and citizenship. To begin, 12 F&M first-year students are matched one-on-one with high schoolers.

The initial phase of the program is a four-day outdoor experience aimed at the development of self-control, self-respect and nonviolent alternatives and the cultivation of possibilities. The setting for the outdoor experience is Camp Shand, a local YMCA facility. Days are focused around themes emphasized by experiential workshops (based largely on AVP and HIP curricula) and outdoor adventure activities like kayaking, ropes courses and hiking.

At the close of the four-day experience, the program continues by way of regular twice-a-month meetings between mentors and mentees. One week per month is devoted to workshops (on issues such as teenage pregnancy, bullying, finding a job, college applications, etc.) while the second provides an outlet for fun- or service-related activities to be completed together as a group. These meetings will continue for the entirety of the mentor and mentee’s college and high school experiences. After four years, we will be able to reach 96-100 students per year. The ultimate goal is to bring young people together to realize their **LA**sting potentials, **UN**iting strength and ability to **CH**ange.

Even if we aren’t calling it “peace-based,” the program is peace in action (a calculated move on my part). Lancaster and F&M have traditionally been at odds socially, economically and politically. Yet, here we are bringing some of Lancaster’s most susceptible youth to a place (physically, mentally and spiritually) where peace is a real possibility and none of those abstract but too-real variables matter. We’re teaching transforming power and encouraging young people to ask big questions about who they are and what they can contribute to the world. We’re teaching alternatives to violence but letting individuals explore their own selves in order to find and live up to such alternatives. We’re modeling strategies that could help two seemingly incompatible communities come together, and we’re trying to convert the “Oh no, what is she going to do to make me change?” to “What are we going to do to create change together?” Another lofty ambition, but one that just might work.

*If you would like additional information about Project LAUNCH or are interested in bringing LAUNCH to your campus or school community, you can contact Melodious Marissa via the Franklin & Marshall College website at [www.fandm.edu/ware/project-launch](http://www.fandm.edu/ware/project-launch).*



# Outer Limits



By Response-able Roger

In our continuing efforts to reach out to youth and school programs in the Seattle area, this April we held a four-day workshop for a therapeutic school. Jubilant Judy from Connecticut was generous enough to help facilitate the workshop.

The idea of presenting a workshop at this school sounded marvelous--a small school for 14 students, with a staff of 12 and a new principal who wanted to create a different culture. On learning about AVP, the principal was hopeful that a workshop for staff and students together could serve as the centerpiece for that new culture. The principal was even willing to give us four full, six-hour school days! I went in with high hopes we could demonstrate the power of AVP in this setting and interest the larger school district in its potential.

I had several pre-workshop meetings with the principal and learned of some of the unique problems for the students and faculty. The students were kids "who had eclipsed the service levels of their school districts" mostly through violent behaviors and acting out. A couple were on release for school from the juvenile detention facility. It seemed analogous to our usual prison workshop population.

As the first day started, we realized this school had far more in common with prisons we had worked in than it did with schools.

Each arriving youth was called from the bus one at a time to enter one locked door for a wanded search before being passed through the next locked door. While it was sad to see the kids going through such a process, it was so reminiscent of prison workshops that it did not unsettle me.

The first day went swimmingly although we did have to ask one student to leave. He could not sit in the group and

was too disruptive. It seemed a minor thing. Unfortunately, it meant two staff members had to leave the group also to supervise the other activities arranged for him. We had a fun and productive day. Staff and kids were laughing and mostly participating well. A teacher noted this was the first time she had ever seen one student participate in a group activity and was amazed he had stuck with it all day. A high point was when the teachers and students were paired for concentric circles and the teachers had to tell about a time they had gotten in trouble. It was wonderful for these students to see their teachers humanized in telling their story. On leaving, a teacher told us, "This was a great day. You're either very good or very lucky - maybe both."

The next morning the school admitted a new student. The principal thought the workshop would serve as a wonderful introduction and opportunity for her to be drawn into the school through community building. It seemed like a good idea. Unfortunately, as the new student was a very attractive young woman, several of the boys began competing for her attention and resenting those who sat next to her or spoke with her. It was alpha males competing for the new female's attention. In addition, a student absent the day before returned, and the student who had left the previous day asked to participate. While unorthodox, we considered this a factor in working in a school and noted we still had

three full days to integrate the new arrivals.

Before lunch, one of the boys became so infuriated at the attention another was getting from the new girl that he

left the group in a huff. A few minutes later he was sending heavy metal chairs flying into the circle. The staff ordered the room cleared, and the young man was talked down and eventually physically restrained. In a side room with several students, we learned this sort of violent outburst occurred almost daily. We had been lucky the previous day. The students were unfazed and began talking about television shows and games as if nothing had happened. In 30 minutes we were back in the room conducting Broken Squares. The teachers advised us against processing the incident in the group.

The third day was bumpy, but still good; however, the group changed again. A couple of students were absent, along with a teacher who had to leave to supervise a student. Below the surface, the "new girl issue" was boiling in ways we did not see.

It erupted on the last day, with one student charging at another. Again, the room was cleared, the students were unfazed, and the young man was talked down. That took an hour and a half, and we had to change workshop locations to let the situation wind down. Judy was evacuated to a side room with the target of the attack and a staffer. That boy quickly found a light bulb, which he broke to fashion as a weapon. He made several efforts to leave the room to engage his attacker. He was talked down several times, and he put the bulb in the garbage can, only to get agitated again and try to leave with it.

We regrouped in another room and recommenced the workshop. We ended with having three groups draw AVP-Transforming Power posters. Seeing the posters made it clear to me, despite everything that happened and didn't happen, that we still accomplished a lot. The posters were wonderful.

It has taken months to process all that happened in this workshop. Of course, lots have been left out of this account. In retrospect, the kids were far more troubled and ill than we had been





led to believe. (One relayed, "I keep telling them I'm going to kill a lot of people when I leave here, and I need more help; but they don't believe me.") Teaching staff and such troubled kids in the same group proved difficult, as staff were ready to work deep and hard while the kids were severely challenged to develop any trust. But the staff had to be there to "control their kids" (a couple of the kids were under orders never to be out of arms' reach of a teacher). For the kids, even simple things like, "What's your favorite music?" were fraught with dangers of ridicule, and they would not risk answering the question. For many, merely identifying their feelings in "Feeling Faces" was a stretch.

The differences between this work and prison work became clearer in many ways, not the least of which is that in prison when a participant gets agitated, fellow inmate participants talk them down and look to the well-being and protection of the guest facilitators and the program. In this new setting, violent disruptions became entertainment and were egged on. At that point, staff became focused, rightfully, on their kids. The vulnerability of facilitators appeared greater in this school than in prison.

At the same time, the staff were enthusiastic about the community building they had experienced, both with fellow staff and the students. One student told us he had been there 8 years and learned more about his teachers and fellow students in our 4 days than he had in the whole previous 8 years. Several of the kids had stretched themselves very far for them. We laughed and played together--something new for some of them. The posters they produced spoke of learning and fun.

In the end, it seemed we had plumbed the outer limits of what AVP could do in this setting. In such a challenged community, we should teach AVP to the teachers and staff and let them integrate it into their work. The dream of creating a "new culture" in workshops with kids and staff in this setting was too ambitious.

*Roger has been active in AVP since 2004, in prisons, community and youth groups as well as with Friends Peace Teams in Guatemala and El Salvador.*

## YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

By Kinetic Khalil



*Why should we work with youth? This is a question that can be answered numerous ways with different levels of depth--the youth are our future, because they need it, etc. And while these answers are pertinent and valid, the reason I always give is that for every positive moment we give them, they receive many more negative moments.*

Working with youth can be challenging, but it also can be the most rewarding. Over the period of my incarceration, I have discovered it is extremely important and beneficial when youth help each other. Activism towards youth is needed on all fronts; however, there is a synergistic energy that surfaces when youth work with each other. To achieve the task of positioning certain youth to lead the way starts with empowerment.

Many incarcerated youth, especially males, have never been told that someone is proud of them, that they did a good job or that their help is needed to do something positive and constructive. This is where the work must start. Positive reinforcement and affirmation have to come, initially, from an outside source. And, most importantly, it has to be genuine because some of our youth have been lied to their whole lives, so they tend to be real good at detecting a lie. Eventually, the youth will be responsible for their own affirmation. The next major step has to be responsibility. Giving the young people a task to complete is not enough although it helps. They have to be given some form of responsibility regarding this task. For instance, the task could be getting two or three youth together to paint a garage. The task is to paint the garage, but giving them the responsibility to choose what colors they want and designating tasks amongst themselves is how responsibility is transferred to them.

The third and final step is getting the youth to gain a form of attachment to the task at hand. This is formed after the first two steps have been implemented. Using the example of the garage again, once the task is complete, the youth can put a name on the garage and begin to use it as their clubhouse. This step serves two purposes--first, it gives the youth a place where they can be safe and where positivity can be fostered; second, it gives them something to call their own. Once they consider something theirs, they have to understand they are responsible for the "upkeep."

While the example of a garage was given, these steps can be applied in many other scenarios. In regards to the work that we do in AVP, Youth Workshops serve this purpose. Youth come in as participants and can be trained to be facilitators. This work is being done right now in New York and all over the country. However, as previously mentioned, our youth get bombarded with so much negativity, so more of this work is needed. Unfortunately, in prison the negativity is magnified; therefore, behind these walls is where this work is needed the most. It is not easy, and the hurdles are many; however, it is not impossible. What is also needed to make the goal of empowering our young people feasible is more youth facilitators. The message is received better when the youth feel they have a connection to the messenger.

Hopefully, anyone who reads this article will be inspired to get involved--or more involved--in this cause. One of the most powerful aspects of AVP is there is room to do so much. Youth empowerment is feasible and obtainable, and it can become a reality. I have seen it, and I am a product of it. Hopefully, from here on out, we all will play our part in this effort.

*Kinetic Khalil a.k.a. Alvaro Cumberbatch has been facilitating AVP since 2004 and served as the Inside AVP Coordinator at Green Haven. He was released in February of this year and is seeking to implement AVP in different agencies throughout the city.*

# Realizing a dream: Prisoner-facilitators offer youth workshop

By Reliable Robin

How many times have you heard the dream of prisoner-facilitators to take HAVP to the youth on the streets? Well, in Ernest Hemingway country, a group of incarcerated AVP facilitators and their community counterparts did just that. Only the at-risk youth came to the prison.

It all started when inside facilitator Sincere Sam Lewis met City Councilman Junior Nuño during a We-Care workshop at Correctional Training Facility (CTF), Soledad, California. Sam convinced Junior to become an AVP facilitator inside CTF, which he did and became "hooked."

After a great deal of groundwork by the Councilman AVP prisoner and community AVP facilitators, welcomed eight at-risk teenage boys from the nearby town of King City for a three-day program. Starting with We Care on Monday, then Tuesday and Wednesday the group completed a Basic AVP workshop inside the prison.

Junior had spent months meeting with these youth at his place of business in King City and drove them to CTF to do the two back-to-back workshops. He spent huge amounts of time as well introducing AVP in South Monterey County to parents, city officials, school staff and the youth themselves. He worked closely with a CTF counselor, an AVP sponsor and secretary of the warden to get the boys cleared and processed for this three-day experience. The inside facilitators were Sincere Sam and Macho Mike. Six AVP-facilitator-participants were a crucial factor in rounding out the workshop experience and being available to the attendees.

Two seriously rival gangs were represented in the group, but the workshop had helped them to drop their gang affiliations. In attendance at graduation, the warden, as well as vice principal of CTF congratulated the graduates. The vice principal spoke about educational opportunities in South County, especially, college class offerings that high school kids could take that would count towards high school and college. Then Sam and Mike spoke up, offering to help pay some of the costs of these courses out of their AVP account, for any boy present who wanted to take this step. There were those present that were so moved that they could hardly speak.

We are definitely doing this again. Dreams can be repeated!

*Reliable Robin has been a facilitator for four years in the two California prisons in the Salinas Valley.*

# 25 To Life – a Documentary Aimed at Teenagers

*"What do you see yourself able to accomplish in 25 years?"*

*"Do you feel that prison is a part of your future?" "How has your impression of life in prison changed since viewing this documentary?"*

These are some of the "Points for Class Discussion" included with the DVD "25 To Life" available through AVP-USA. The 35-minute documentary is narrated by Happy Helen, an 80-year-old Connecticut resident, AVP facilitator and long-time advocate for incarcerated men. On the board of Hudson Link—an organization that brings college education into Sing Sing—she worked with a local filmmaker to bring the stories of formerly incarcerated men and women to the attention of at-risk youth, with the goal of encouraging young people to "make different choices!"

In a recent interview, Helen reported, "One scene in the movie was of a drug deal. I happened to be in the right place at the right time. I filmed it and got away safely. I have shown the film at Boys' and Girls' Clubs, alternative high schools and Kids in Crisis and have given it to many police stations in Connecticut, Philadelphia, Camden and Atlantic City. I will show it anywhere. I hope it will make a difference."

To order the DVD, see the order form in this *Transformer* or contact the distribution center at [avp@avpusa.org](mailto:avp@avpusa.org)



**Welcome edition:**  
The 4th edition of the HIPP (Help Increase the Peace Project) published by AFSC will be available shortly in the Distribution Center. (See order form)

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- 1- Can anyone come to the Annual Gathering?
- 2- What dates are the conference?
- 3- Can I use public transportation to get there?

Answers on page 9





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# AVP in Poughkeepsie - Walking in Another's Shoes

By Now-or-Never Nurideen

Over the course of the last year, my co-facilitator Jubilant Judy and I have been incredibly blessed to work with a significant number of young people during several AVP workshops held at the Family Partnership Center in Poughkeepsie, NY. Real Skills Network, an after-school program, has sponsored the workshops. It has been a learning experience and heartfelt journey for all involved. At a glance, the workshops can be summarized as insightful, introspective and, at times, intense.

The array of opinions and emotions surrounding the question, "What is violence?" were more far-reaching than I've experienced in prior workshops. Participants' stories of challenges and triumphs with violence were impactful.



It hammered home the forgotten adage "Never judge a person until



you have walked a mile in his or her shoes," which, in and of itself, is in synch with basic AVP philosophy: "We listen before making judgments." Although we clearly differentiated between AVP

and therapy, the timely discussions, community building exercises and light and livelies resulted in a necessary release of emotions. A writer once stated, "The world breaks all of us, but afterward many are strong in the broken places."

I can say for certain that AVP made an enormous impression on some participants.



Hungry Hensleigh, who has taken her Training for Facilitators, stated: "AVP was engaging and fun. I was able to bond with everyone in the group. After the workshops, I was left with a lot of issues to think about; and I gained

a fresh perspective. As human beings we get into patterns, but AVP allows you to see and think about violence."



Teaching Tree, who is responsible for coordinating the workshops, has the ear and trust of the youth of Poughkeepsie. His Real Skills Network has given AVP access to an abundance of enthusiastic participants. Some of the participants already have become facilitators. Several adults, including clergy and community members, have completed at least the basic level of AVP. Landing Strip and an active Area Council are on the horizon in Poughkeepsie.



*Now-or-Never Nurideen has been an AVP facilitator since 1989 while incarcerated in NY State prisons and has continued to facilitate in the community since his release.*



*Peg Erlanger  
AVP USA President 2008 - 2010*

## In Memoriam Peaceful Peg

**AVP USA President 2008 - 2010**

Peg Erlanger, our National President, died at home on Saturday, July 24, after a long fight with breast cancer. She was 63.

She will be remembered by many for a multitude of kindnesses and for the following qualities-

- |                      |                          |                         |
|----------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| <i>Role model</i>    | <i>Deep intelligence</i> | <i>Loyal</i>            |
| <i>Committed</i>     | <i>Fearless</i>          | <i>Energetic</i>        |
| <i>Caring</i>        | <i>Visionary</i>         | <i>Down to earth</i>    |
| <i>Loving</i>        | <i>Persistent</i>        | <i>Capable</i>          |
| <i>Challenging</i>   | <i>Courageous</i>        | <i>Boundless energy</i> |
| <i>Irrepressible</i> | <i>Clear thinking</i>    | <i>Compassionate</i>    |
| <i>Fun</i>           | <i>Dependable</i>        | <i>Warm</i>             |
| <i>Earthy</i>        | <i>Vibrant</i>           | <i>Creative</i>         |
| <i>Strong</i>        | <i>Far sighted</i>       | <i>Inclusive</i>        |



# Hi fellow AVPers!

With the sad death of our beloved Peg Erlanger, I was asked recently by the AVP-USA Committee of Committees to step up to be the President of AVP-USA. I come to this responsibility with very mixed feelings. I had hoped to learn at Peg's knee for a long while as Vice President, and it is daunting to be asked to serve you all.

As I approach this responsibility, I have been thinking about what and who AVP is. And, of course, the obvious answer is - AVP is you, the facilitators and workshop participants. Our 2009 annual report tells us that last year 1,880 facilitators led 1,018 total workshops with 14,373 participants! That's who AVP is, and that's what we do!

The work of the national AVP organization is conducted by a number of committees, including Education, Communications, Conference, Finance, International, Youth and Re-entry and the Committee of Local and Regional Groups. At this year's annual meeting in Minnesota, 2 new subcommittees were formed - the **Public Relations Committee** and the **Social Media Committee**. These 2 committees are working to make us better known to the community at large. These committees exist to support you, our facilitators - you who are AVP.

Representatives from each committee serve on the Committee of Committees which is a coordinating/steering group. Again, we exist to serve you - the inside and outside facilitators, the prison programs and the local chapters.

How can AVP-USA serve our facilitators and the local chapters better? What can we do to improve your AVP life?

We need to hear from you with your ideas and your needs. There are a few things you can do to make your ideas heard. If you have access to the internet, you can join AVP's online discussion group. Send an e-mail to [avp@avpusa.org](mailto:avp@avpusa.org), asking to subscribe to AVP-L. This will put you in touch with facilitators across the country and around the world. You also can send your ideas to me at [president@avpusa.org](mailto:president@avpusa.org). Or call 888-278-7820 or write to AVP/USA, 1050 Selby Ave., St. Paul, MN 55104. Inside facilitators can forward ideas via their local outside teams.

How can AVP-USA better serve you? We are waiting to hear from you!

Response-able Roger  
President AVP USA

# An Urban Vision of Peace Dojos

Jubilant Judy

I first met Bill Leicht 10 years ago at a church in the Bronx where he was one of the team facilitating my Training for Facilitators. It was an intense weekend. My fellow participants included a martial arts practitioner from Hawaii and a Latin King gang leader.

I have come to realize that this apparent diversity of perspectives in the workshop was not random but represented an important collective of energy which has continued to be at work in Bill's life.

Bill first connected with martial arts through his early work with the Ghetto Brothers, a legendary Bronx street gang of the 1960's. The gang members were keen practitioners. Bill saw the potential synergy between martial arts and AVP materialize as physical practice, transforming power and verbal communication intersected to bring about peacemaking and non-violence.

In those early days, many in AVP were skeptical if not downright nervous about using martial arts in this way because they equated teaching martial arts skills with teaching violence. However, Bill pursued the idea of the Peace Dojo, ran one in the Bronx for some time, and has developed the model very successfully internationally.

A Peace Dojo is a martial arts school in which martial practice is oriented explicitly towards teaching skills of non-violence, conflict resolution and peacemaking. Martial practice is uniquely valuable for practicing peace because attack/defense drills offer the opportunity to train oneself to receive an opponent in an empathic and harmonious way.

For more information visit [www.aiki-extensions.org](http://www.aiki-extensions.org)

## 2011 AVP/USA Conference Quiz #2 answers:

- 1- No one is turned away from the Annual Gathering but it is focused on AVP Facilitators and this is their only time to be together.
- 2- Dates are May 27-30, 2010
- 3- Yes, public transportation is handy to the site.

## White Candles & Condoms

By Jubilant Judy

This summer a friend shared this with me. She went to Haiti to help with the disaster response and arrived with certain assumptions about what the people would most surely need – food and shelter. The team found tent cities established and asked the people about their most pressing needs.

“White candles – we need white candles for our altars to keep away the evil spirits. And condoms, lots of condoms because in the tent cities there’s so much opportunity for casual sex; and with HIV, we need to protect our people.” Food was actually quite low on their list.

As I reflected on this story, I thought about the assumptions that we make all the time about the needs of others and how we can help them. We see communities with many struggles, and we believe we have the solutions. Indeed, we may have something really useful; to offer but until we actually assume the role of community ally and ask the question “How can we help?”, we may be missing some important feedback.

As I have deepened my engagement with “at risk youth,” I have come to appreciate more fully how we are failing these kids on so many levels. My offering of sustenance in the form of AVP may be truly vital and life saving, but I have to be open to hearing their version of what represents “white candles and condoms.”

I find myself asking how great the threat is that I will come and go and the children will remain lost and alone in a dangerous tent city waiting for the next earthquake.

## Quarterly Youth Digest

The AVP Youth Committee produces a quarterly news digest with information about AVP youth programs around the country. Please let us know what is going on in your area - the more we share our joys and concerns, the more we help each other. Send your news to AVP-Youth@googlegroups.com and we will add your story to the quarterly report.

**Lost Generation** is a poem written by student Jonathan Reed. Reading it from the top down is disheartening; reading it from the bottom up is uplifting!

### Lost Generation

I am part of a lost generation  
and I refuse to believe that  
I can change the world  
I realize this may be a shock but  
“Happiness comes from within.”  
is a lie, and  
“Money will make me happy.”  
So in 30 years I will tell my children  
they are not the most important thing in my life  
My employer will know that  
I have my priorities straight because  
work is more important than family  
I tell you this  
Once upon a time  
Families stayed together  
but this will not be true in my era  
This is a quick fix society  
Experts tell me  
30 years from now, I will be celebrating the 10th anniversary of my divorce  
I do not concede that  
I will live in a country of my own making  
In the future  
Environmental destruction will be the norm  
No longer can it be said that  
My peers and I care about this earth  
It will be evident that  
My generation is apathetic and lethargic  
It is foolish to presume that  
There is hope.  
And all of this will come true unless we choose to *reverse it*.



## AVP and the Medical Model

By Rashidah Rebecca

I am a mental health counselor intern working for clinical hours towards New York State licensure in a private clinic in the Bronx, New York City. The clinical environment in which I am practicing follows the medical model that identifies pathologies and medical treatments for individuals diagnosed with symptoms and syndromes. This is what insurance pays for.

Throughout graduate school, the most valuable growth experience I had was doing AVP in Bedford Hills, Sing Sing, and Green Haven. I amassed over 600 AVP hours in three years. It was in prison that true meaning was given to essential counseling concepts like accurate empathy, unconditional positive regard and genuineness. It is in these prison groups that I continue to learn of the complexities of anger, fear, hate and loss--where men, women, and I struggle to bring meaning to our complicated and seemingly meaningless lives. We learn ways to care for ourselves and others. While staying grounded here, we practice skills that help us find non-violent ways to live and we learn that our power comes from sharing power.

So, when the clinic in which I am interning asked me to run an anger management group for Bronx youth, I felt ready for this challenge. I knew I

would adapt AVP to the medical model that I am now a part of. After a slow start, I now have a group of young men and women, 14 to 17 years old. We meet once a week for 90 minutes. Some of the members are court-mandated. All pay for this group through insurance; the most popular is Medicaid. By all accounts our first group meeting was successful. I closed the group with "What do I want to get out of this group?" The answers to this question far surpassed what I dared wished for: "I want to learn how to stop fighting." "I want to feel relaxed inside." "My baby keeps me from fighting. I don't want to fight after my baby is born." "I pass."

What makes AVP work? Is the 22- hour format essential? Is the volunteer format essential? Will my medical-model, 90-minute, court-mandated workshop undermine my AVP efforts? Just as AVP transcends the craziness of prison, I expect it to transcend the medical environment I am in. I am expecting the best from myself and the group. This experience reminds me of my own troubled youth and an important adult I allowed in. He dared to care, asked me to respect myself and gave me the space to try new behaviors. I want to be that to the youth in this group.

## How can your community facilitators receive the newsletter economically?

### Paper Copy:

Individually:  
\$15 for 1 year  
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\$35 for 3 years.

**Community Rate** for 5 or more subscriptions entered together:  
Only \$10/year.

**Inside Rate** for incarcerated individuals:  
\$5.00 per year.

### Green Electronic Copy:

Individually: \$10 per year.  
**Community Rate** for 5 or more subscriptions entered together:  
Only \$5/year

**Write an issue of the newsletter** and receive \$100 credit toward subscriptions entered together at one time.  
See page 2 for contact information.

*This edition of The Transformer was sponsored by the APV/USA Youth Committee. The APV USA Youth Committee welcomes AVP facilitators of all ages who are interested in the practice of non-violence with youth in any setting. The mission and function of the committee is currently described as follows -*

The Mission of the Youth Committee is to support the development of an intentional and sustainable youth program within AVP and to empower youth to practice non-violence as a way of life.

The functions of the committee are:

To identify and connect people within AVP who are passionate about youth work.

To develop strategies to get AVP workshops to the maximum number of youth in schools, prisons and the community.

To identify the challenges inherent in working with youth and document policy guidelines.

To identify and connect with peer organizations working with youth, in particular to develop an ongoing relationship with AFSC.

To identify sources of funding and sponsorship.

To support the work of training youth AVP facilitators.

If you are interested in joining the AVP-USA Youth Committee, contact [jubilantjudy@mac.com](mailto:jubilantjudy@mac.com). Inside facilitators are encouraged to contact the Youth Committee by writing to:

Jubilant Judy c/o AVP/USA, 1050 Selby Ave. St. Paul, MN 55104

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## Check your calendar, have you written this in it?

### Memorial Day Weekend, AVP USA Conference, May 27-30, 2011

This 2011 event for facilitators will be held at the bucolic, wooded, serene Notre Dame de Namur University ([www.ndnu.edu](http://www.ndnu.edu)). Belmont, California, on the San Francisco peninsula.

To get your best airfare start exploring flights into Oakland, San Francisco and San Jose. All have public transportation to Belmont station, from there it is an easy walk or quick pick up. (The day-long special workshop is happening again this year.) More details and registration will be in the Winter Transformer

### Upcoming issues of your *TRANSFORMER*

Watch for these future editions specifically written by and for facilitators:

#### Winter 2010:

Re-Entry and Conference Registration Information – John Mandala

#### Spring 2011:

by Sing Sing Prison, New York (Theme still being selected)

#### Summer 2011:

by Tampa Bay, Florida (Theme still being selected)

For information on any of these issues or writing your own, contact  
AVP Pat@earthlink.net