



Peaceful Pathways

ALTERNATIVES TO VIOLENCE PROJECT

Western Australia

**November/
December
2006**

Coming Events

Community Workshops

Basic at Bicton
6th—7th Jan 2007
Contact: Shane Bailey
Ph. 9374 1515

Advanced at Bicton
20th – 21st Jan 2007
Contact: Anna Alderson
Ph. 043 890 2586

Acacia Workshop

Mainstream Basic
25th – 27th Nov 2006
Contact: Kelli Featherstone
Ph: 9337 5560

End of year gathering Acacia

2nd Dec 2006
Meet at Visitors Centre
9.45am—3.00pm
Must have prearranged police
clearance
Contact: Kelli Featherstone
Ph: 9337 5560

Training Night at Quaker Meeting House

Thursday 1st Feb 2007 at
7.30pm
Topic to be announced

Celebrate!

*with the
AVP Community
the end of a successful
Year!*

When: Dec 11th 2006

Time: 6.30pm

At: Quaker Meeting House

35 Clifton St. Mt Lawley

Bring a plate to share

AVP International Gathering Epistle

At the start of spring, 104 people from 23 countries have gathered at Hartbeespoort Dam between Johannesburg and Pretoria, South Africa: a rainbow gathering in the Rainbow Nation. We have come together at The Good Shepherd Retreat Centre, a place of welcoming hospitality, peace and spirituality. In this beautiful place we have found new friends and old friends, hugs and laughter, singing and dancing, and a dazzling array of talks, workshops and shared wisdom. We have been moved by personal testimonies and fired by the many visionaries in our midst.

The Gathering was designed, organised and facilitated by an inspiring team of South African staff and volunteers based at Phaphama Initiatives. An essential part of the experience has been the South African context in which we have shared the

food, the culture, the languages, the history and current concerns of our host nation. For five days we have all been Africans. We have lived the concept of ubuntu: umuntu ngumuntu gabantu, the interconnectedness that makes us human.

Three themes, or 'strands', have woven the fabric of the Gathering. The work of the first strand has been to establish the AVP International Development and Resource Committee to 'gather and provide resources to the AVP community to increase its full potential for peace and nonviolence worldwide'.

In the second strand we have shared experiences and skills gained through the unique AVP learning process. Our 'Grandfather', Steve Angell, has been with us to encourage and inspire us as we look at ways to improve, refine, expand and develop AVP in ways appropriate to our differing cultures and

societies. Despite our obvious differences, we have been amazed by the common underlying spirit and processes of AVP.

The third strand has explored strategies for local organisations to achieve stability and sustainable growth. Those of us from outside Africa have been impressed by the energy and growth of AVP in African countries – countries with appalling experiences, past and present, of war, genocide, apartheid, poverty, disease and crime. These countries have used AVP imaginatively in locally relevant ways. In Rwanda 1,400 newly elected local Gacaca judges have received AVP training. In Sudan, where AVP started in December 2005, 13 workshops have already helped to bridge the gulfs between Christians and Muslims, men and women and among the many tribal groups.

Cont' pp.2

From pp. 1

The Franciscan Damietta Initiative in Africa is a grassroots movement promoting non-violence, reconciliation and care for the environment. It uses AVP for its initial training programme.

In South Africa, amongst AVP's many partners and projects, is the HIPP (Helping Increase Peace and Positivity) Club, where young people take their own version of AVP into schools and offer skillful facilitation and powerful role-models. The list is endless.

The Gathering has, above all, affirmed our vision of AVP and its transforming power. In small and large groups we have learned from each other that we can be infinitely creative and flexible with this precious gift. We also recognise the many organisational challenges that face us.

The messages from U.S. prisoners have reminded us of all our brothers and sisters incarcerated around the world. Many other AVPers were not able to be with us in person, but we feel your spirit has been with us.

With blessings and a warm South African Hug!

"If you think you're too small to have an impact try going to bed with a mosquito in the room."

- Anita Koddick

All thrills, no spills for 4 of AVP's newest inmate facilitators

Joe shares.....

'What have I got myself into this time?' was my first thought. I hadn't felt this nervous or apprehensive since my final school exams. Sweaty palms and all – go away, behave unna?

But seriously, if it hadn't been for Sally (Smiling) and Kelli (Creative), the outside facilitators, and my small 'band of brothers', fellow prisoners, Frederick, Wesley, Matthew and last, but not least myself, Joe, I wouldn't have been able to pull this off.

I either had to go full bore into it or pick up my bat and ball then go home – end of story. I am proud to say that I did stay, and it was awesome to lead; as well as, to follow.

I learnt a lot about myself and how to get people to express themselves. From there on there was nothing but support – confidence and belief. I came away from this program as I did with my very first basic AVP. Hungry!

Hungry to learn more about AVP, hungry to learn about myself and eager to give back to those who want it and the community at large, to those who started me on this quest. My journey has just begun and my soul thanks you.

Matt's journey begins

Being a first time facilitator was great. I was a bit nervous but I was more excited than anything. Once I did a few exercises my confidence level went way up and I didn't want to stop. I can't wait to do my next workshop.

This is just the start of my AVP journey and I learnt a lot about myself during the course and I will continue to learn. Even as a facilitator I came away on a high, and I really enjoy helping people and sharing my experiences.

Frederick's fear becomes confidence

I was terrified at the idea of delivering any part of the agenda during my first AVP Workshop. Only weeks earlier I had finished the T4F workshop and now I was a trainee facilitator in an AVP Basic workshop at Acacia Prison.

Part of me was eager to be part of the workshop and part of me wished I hadn't volunteered for so much of the delivery. I spent what felt like endless numbers of hours writing and re-writing my intros and it wasn't until the morning of the workshop that I realised that the other trainee facilitators were just as nervous.

On the morning of the first day, I nervously stumbled through the AVP Philosophy but as the day wore-on, I felt better about what I had to do and how to deliver the information. I wouldn't say all of my nerves had disappeared, but at least my heart rate dropped to below critical, and my nervous twitches had subsided.

External facilitators ensured that I didn't miss anything and my fellow trainees were also very supportive, providing me with encouragement and confidence. I felt a strong sense of co-operation and the weekend helped to reinforce the AVP Themes.

Starting from total fear to being confident – well, at least not wanting to throw-up – in what I had to do, paralleled what the new participants went through over the weekend. They started off very tentatively but by the last day they were open, actively participated; likewise, I began tentatively and actively shared my experiences, and by the end of the workshop I felt confident enough to want to help facilitate another AVP workshop.

Wes swims well in deep water.

When I first did the basic AVP I thought it was the best program in the world. I wanted to go on and do the entirety of programs on offer, which I did.

I thought to myself, if I got so much out of the program and in particular the care and support I felt from the facilitators, then I could do exactly the same and give back to the prison community. I have to admit that my intentions were a bit selfish because my main aim was to take this program to the Nyoongar community, which I believe, as a Nyoongar person myself, is in want and need of it.

My experience of facilitating my first AVP workshop was daunting yet exhilarating. Daunting because I thought, what have I got myself into. I thought, "Wes, you have put yourself into deep water now", because the participants are going to know this is your first time and are going to be resistant to the process. However, I learnt that we are all in this together and that we are all learning from each other. Anyhow it was exhilarating because the participants were great and we all had fun. I had worked myself up for nothing. I know I am now confident enough to do many more.

Thank you AVP, you have changed my life!

"Success means fulfilling your own dreams, singing your own song, dancing your own dance, creating from your heart and enjoying the journey, trusting that whatever happens, it will be OK. Creating your own adventure!" -- Elana Lindquist

Workshop Recommendations-September Training Night

We considered a few of the recommendations from some recent community and prison workshops.

Evaluations – do we overdo these?

We agreed that these can be tedious and boring to participants if not facilitated skillfully. However, they are an important part of the structure, particularly in the prison setting where it gives some real power to the inmates. They give participants time to reflect and review and can be affirming for the facilitators. They also help to maintain the quality and integrity of the program and keep us on our toes. We do tend to alter workshops over time as well as within individual workshops in response to evaluations. However we should be careful of making lasting changes because of feedback from individuals. We should be alert for trends.

How well do we deal with upset participants?

There has been feedback that we can leave individuals feeling vulnerable and adrift after a workshop. We do stress that we are not a therapy group, but that will not prevent the occasional participant from tapping into disturbing emotional hurts or memories. In the community we can have a team member listen to the upset person but we have to be cautious of "one on ones" in the prison. It would be good to have a resource kit of contacts in the suitcase. There is a list of such contacts in the phone book. If follow-up is needed we can invite participants to training nights and give an AVP

pamphlet with our email address and voice mail. For those feeling vulnerable we can stress the right to pass and acknowledge the hurt and courage from those who are upset. Perhaps call a silence and remember that most of us are fairly robust and tears can be a sign that workshop is reaching people at a deep level. This would be a useful topic for a future training night.

The Construction Exercise

We have had feedback that this exercise encourages competition and yet without that aspect it can seem rather boring and pointless. We often give an instruction "build the highest" and this invariably leads to competition between the groups. This though can lead to a valuable discussion on the advantages and disadvantages of competition. Alternatives that have been used are "something that represents community" or a "sacred space." As with all exercises we have to consider what we are trying to achieve. Ultimately it is about communication and cooperation. We may want to have a competitive theme and a fun time also. The exercise can be adapted to each group and its position in the workshop.

How much do we want to labour the literal "goodbye" in the role play.

Traditionally we have been strict about the actual words "goodbye" and certainly not "seeya" which is more

commonly used. However we do not want to embarrass (or annoy!) participants unnecessarily. If we feel that they are safely out of role and they say "seeya" it is probably safe to let it stand. However even if they say "goodbye" yet the facilitator feels they are still hanging on to the role then more work may need to be done. Alternatively if they say "seeya" – ask if there is another way they can say it. Ask if they feel disconnected. Prior warning in the role play intro that we are careful in de-roling will prepare them for our cautious approach. Team members should also be alert for incomplete de-roling but should not "jump in" too quickly.

How do we deal with the question "how does communication help when someone is trying to pick a fight with you?" cont' pp.4

"Forgiveness grows out of the wisdom of the heart and forgiveness is the heart of wisdom. Love forever-gives."

**Michael J. Tamura,
in "You Are The Answer"
Emile**

AVP-WA

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More from the international Conference A Personal Experience

I accompanied my wife to the International Gathering to South Africa with some trepidation. This was for two reasons;

1. I had no previous experience of AVP, except as a visitor at Christmas for the end of the year gathering.
2. Would I be bored?

I prepared myself to overcome this by taking a couple of good books and some music in case a piano was available. However within a couple of hours, to my great surprise, I started to be absorbed by the people that I was commencing to meet. This led me to sign up for 2 workshops for the next day. These were gently carried out with great motivation by the facilitators, an observation which did not wane for the remaining week.

Space is limited but I must express my emotion which I felt when I witnessed the wonderful attitude of the black Africans whom I met who seem to so resilient to their conditions. They were of course familiar with AVP. If only AVP could spread like AIDS has done, then Africa would find the peace etc. which it so sorely needs.

This experience has already led me to attend a basic workshop in Perth and in January I will be participating in an advanced workshop.

Douglas Sturrock

"We are one big family of people, trying to make our way through the unfolding puzzle of life. We are all connected to one another in the heart. Connecting with the ultimate source of love is possible through discovering the hidden power in your heart."

**-- Sara Paddison,
*Hidden Power of the Heart***

From pp.3 workshop recommendations September training night.

This question often comes up early in a prison workshop and may be related to what is relevant and current to the life of some of the inmates. It is difficult but important that we deal with it with integrity and not brush it off or avoid it. Some possibilities: What does the group think? AVP does not have all the answers; refer to the non-violent communication skills course that some of the guys may have done; maybe ask for time for the team to consider before coming back with an answer; trust the process; use the "unanswered questions" poster and reconsider at the end of the workshop.

Jim Thom

16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence

Amnesty International Australia (WA) and the Women's Council for Domestic and Family Violence Services (WA) would like to invite you to participate in this year's 16 days of Activism Against Gender Violence. The 16 days of activism to raise awareness amongst the community about gender violence begins on 25 November 2006, International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and ends on December 10th, International Human Rights Day.

We hope that many individuals and organisations will participate in or organise an event in order to symbolically link the connections between women, violence and human rights and assist us in putting an end to gender violence. This year we are once again appealing to many organisations to raise the profile of this grave human rights violation by organising an event with relatives, friends or work colleagues.

Information please contact: Wendy Watson Community Campaigner

Email: wwatson@amnesty.org.au