



From AVP/NY's Board Council President:



Welcome!!! Our long awaited newsletter is finally in your hands. AVP's approach to building community has been a core of our work for over 35 years and we are darn good at it. Over the years, thousands have taken AVP workshops in many parts of the world and describe our workshops as life-changing. Forgive the pun, but we

transform the way people approach life with a bit of our own "Transforming Power."

This is a very exciting time for AVP on both a state and national level. With the creation of a new ad-hoc committee to address re-entry issues on a national level, AVP will be gathering information from around the country and developing some "best practices" in the future. This will be leading up to the 2009 AVP-USA National Conference that will be hosted by AVP-NY next May.

We have a lot of work to do. With a new web-site under development, a new newsletter, and some new programs we will be needing help. Our regional family gathering at Long Point Camp on Seneca Lake is set for Columbus Day weekend, and we need your attendance to remind each of us that "the future is now."

This year I would like to remind us all to "**Be loyal.**" Remember you will fail at it sometimes. You have already, but it's alright. A person who does not know loyalty, from both ends, does not really know his brother or sister. Loyalty is not a matter of give-and-take: *He did me a favor, therefore I owe him one.* It is the recognition of our AVP bond, the honoring of a shared history, the reemergence of the vows we make in the tight times. It doesn't mean complete agreement or invisible blood ties. It is a currency of selflessness, given without expectation and capable of the most transforming return. Remember your best AVP moment and bring it to your gathering. Spread the news, and see you soon!

— Ray Rios, AVP/NY Board Council President

Call for Facilitators!!

We need facilitators for these programs:

- **Eastern Prison** (Catskill Area Council) monthly workshops
Outside Coordinator: Betsy Rothstein
- **Woodbourne Prison** (Catskill Area Council) third weekend of every month workshops,
Outside Coordinator: Mary Ann Burke
- **Otisville and Sullivan Prisons** (Catskill Area Council) Outside Coordinator: Mary Ann Burke
- **Green Haven Prison** (Mid-Hudson AC) third weekend of every month workshops,
Outside Coordinator: Carolyn Polikarpus
- **Flight Path to Freedom / Redemption Center** Community Workshops (NYC Area Council)
Coordinator: Mark Graham
- **Landing Strip**, our weekly support group for AVP/NYers recently released (NYC AC)
Coordinators: Ray Rios and Mark Graham

Contact our AVP/NY office for more information at: 800-909-8920 or avpnys@aol.com



Outside facilitators and participants at Auburn Prison

How You Can Help

Please consider getting involved (or more involved)!!

- Take a workshop
- Become a facilitator
- Coordinate workshops
- Attend our annual gathering on Seneca Lake, October 10 — 12, 2008
- Provide meals for community workshops
- **Make a financial contribution** (envelope enclosed) — *thank you!!*

Johnny Journeyman

by Johnny Yuen



AVP is a journey for me. It is a journey that started when I was in a place called Sing Sing. I was working at the college office then as an administrative aide for the Mercy College program. I had heard of AVP through the prison grapevine but, at that time, I didn't believe that AVP could offer me anything. After all, I'm Mr. College. I'm the director's Right Hand Man.

Along came Jolly Jim, who asked me if I wanted to participate in an AVP workshop. I would see Jolly Jim everyday because he brought the college office our change sheets, callout requests, prison memos, and so on. I also knew, through the same grapevine, that Jolly Jim was the Inside Coordinator for the AVP program. I told him I don't know. I said that to sit in a room full of strangers for three days didn't sound like fun to me. I also said that I'm getting all that I need from the college program.

Good thing Jolly Jim didn't accept any of my brush-offs. It was obvious that he saw something in me that I didn't see within myself. Little did I suspect, my journey was about to begin when I told Jolly Jim to put me in for the AVP Basic.

As in any journey, we meet people. People come, people go. Some become fellow pilgrims and we walk the path for awhile until the road diverges and we part ways to pursue our own path. And in these encounters, our lives become richer and more colorful. This has been the way for me. I remember, not so much the exercises or the light and livelies, but the shared experiences that we went through as a family which will be the "Kodak Moments" that made life worth living.

***This gathering gave birth to the
Sing Sing Peace Initiative...
The full family of AVP made it happen.***

For instance, AVP was in Sing Sing. But that did not prevent a man from being killed for wearing a cross. Well, at the AVP gathering after the young man's death, this was pointed out: Is AVP making a difference? How are we impacting a prisoner's life? This gathering gave birth to the Sing Sing Peace Initiative. And the full family of AVP made it happen. This included the sweat and tears of the outside volunteers and the prison family who worked hard.

We had to go into the visiting room to interact with the families there to get their involvement. The outside volunteers had to "somehow" get cooperation from the prison administration to allow AVP to videotape messages from the visitors in the visiting room to give to the prisoners to check out during movie nights in the auditorium.

The AVP family on the inside had to get the cooperation of the gang members to agree to sixty days of peace where there would be no violence for the next sixty days. So for the next sixty days, AVP had events set up to propagate the message of peace: how we can all live with one another, and that there are other ways of expressing our disagreements with one another other than through violent means. To demonstrate this, AVP held competitive events in the yard and in the school building; and, we even had the gang leaders hold hands on the stage in the auditorium at our End of 60 Days of Peace Show.

Somehow, AVP had to get the funds to pay for all this: the materials to set up the show in the auditorium, funds for the prizes for the events, money to pay for copies of literature, where to get refreshments, and so on. And we got the funds! From within the prison, we got the NAACP, the Jaycees, and other inmate organizations to provide the funds for the events and refreshments. All this was daunting but the AVP family came through this like a sturdy ship through a storm. And the news of this spread to other facilities and they, too, wanted a peace initiative of their own.

I entered into a journey that introduced me to a family which endures to this day. The journey continues...

The Johnny who was content in the college office would never have participated in a daunting event such as the Peace Initiative. He would be like a traveler who journeys from one part of the world to another part of the world and talks about how great a time he had; yet, missed how the dirt felt between his toes, the fragrant smell of the flowers and trees, how warm the sun felt on his skin, the blueness of the sky, the sounds coming from the distance, and the welcomed companionship of a fellow traveler.

Because Jolly Jim asked me to participate in an AVP workshop, I came out of the college office and entered into a journey that introduced me to a family which endures to this day. The journey continues, and I look forward to meeting new pilgrims and exploring new paths.

Jurassic Johnny, aka Johnny Yuen, has been a facilitator since 1988 and currently serves on the AVP/NY Board.

Flight Path to Freedom

In 2006, AVP/NY initiated the Flight Path to Freedom (FPTF) program to provide support for returning AVP/NY'ers as they reenter the community. The vision was to provide referrals for housing and employment for AVP facilitators and participants upon their release from prison. The initial program hired a consultant who worked with various agencies to link the returning prisoners to services. After 11 months, the program was laid down. We hoped to find a more direct vehicle from which to offer the services.

In late 2007, an opportunity was presented to us to reinstate Flight Path to Freedom through Mark Graham and the Redemption Center. We have entered into a trial period of funding with Mark Graham as our FPTF consultant. Mark's goals are to provide housing and employment services to returning AVP facilitators and participants as well as to introduce non-AVPers to the program through community-based workshops and Landing Strip (a support group for men and women AVPers returning to life on the outside). Currently Mark has initiated twice monthly Landing Strip meetings at the Redemption Center and presented a Basic workshop at the center and has plans for more workshops. He meets monthly with AVP/NY Board Council's Committee of Care and reports on his goals. As the Redemption Center is a transitional housing community and provides job linkages for its residents, it offers fertile ground for Mark and AVP/NY.

From the street it looks like nothing special, like all the other narrow, vinyl-sided houses on the block...steep concrete steps, no yard or grass to be seen. Blinds are closed, giving a blank, disinterested look to the street. You'd never guess that inside there are small miracles taking place everyday. And the big miracle which is the existence of The Redemption Center on Herkimer Street, right in the heart of Bed-Stuy (Bedford-Stuyvesant to non-New Yorkers).



Jacob Silberberg

Mark Graham, Executive Director of the Redemption Center, on the RC's front steps

The Redemption Center is a not-for-profit, social service agency providing transitional housing for those returning from prison. Too often that long awaited time of freedom is filled with challenges that most of us can't even imagine. No place to live, no job, no support system. And many coming home after years of incarceration find themselves in the position of having turned their lives around in prison and ready to take on the responsibilities of a productive citizen only to find all the doors closed to them. At The Redemption Center they find a safe haven where they can live while they get their lives together; dormitory style housing, a kitchen where they can prepare meals, a case manager who will help them figure out achievable goals and the steps they need to get there and help with linkages to agencies for employment and other services.

They opened the doors in July 2007 when their first resident, John Conyers, arrived. After serving as the house manager keeping everyone following the house rules and working and

living together in relative harmony, John has moved on to his own apartment and a paying job. All the staff but one are former prisoners who have turned *their* lives around and now want to give back by reaching out a hand to those coming behind them. And the staff are currently working for stipends only as there is no money to pay them consistently. The staff are: Mark Graham, Executive Director; Nuradeen Islam, Case Manager; Andra Indramattie, Program Director; Jamel Masey, Field Operation Director; and Kim Kolvinsky, Administrative Assistant.

There are house rules and standards of behavior. No drinking or drugs or you're history. The residents are expected to be out each day either at a job, looking for work, or involved in a program that prepares them for employment. Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) principles are also part of the foundation they are building; to impart conflict resolution skills, along with life skills. All the principals in the administration are longtime AVP facilitators.

But even miracles don't come cheap anymore. The Center is really struggling financially; even as there is success in the small miracles of finding jobs, learning how to use the Laundromat, how to grocery shop, how to negotiate a world that may be very different and intimidating for those long behind bars, there is a constant shortfall in their budget as they strain to pay their bills for rent, electric, heat, etc.

The support of AVP/NY for Flight Path to Freedom helps to keep things afloat at the Center. In return we are fulfilling our goal of providing services to AVPers as they return to their communities.

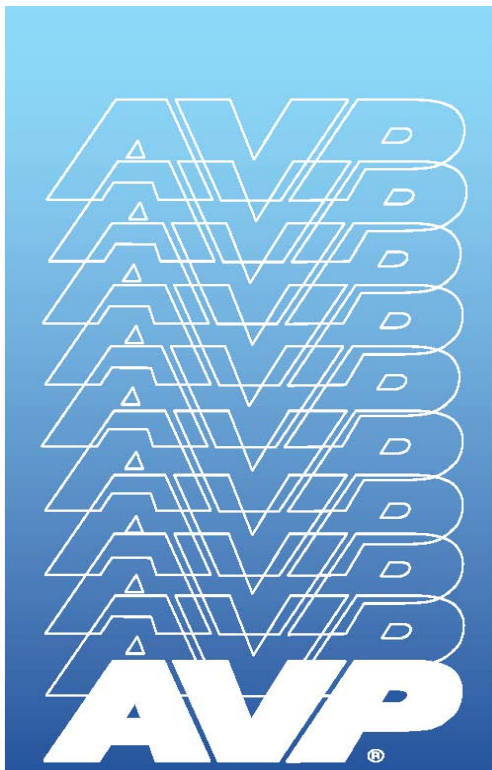
The Redemption Center was recently featured in the New York Times; here is a link to the story: <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/07/nyregion/07citywide.html?scp=1&sq=redemption+center&st=nyt>

— Carolyn Polikarpus, AVP/NY Board Council Vice President and Convener of the Committee of Care.

ALTERNATIVES TO VIOLENCE PROJECT / NEW YORK

2007 Workshop Summary Report

ALBION Prison (Women's)	GREEN HAVEN Prison	WOODBOURNE Prison	2007 PRISON WORKSHOP TOTALS:
Workshop count: 1	Workshop count: 23	Workshop count: 7	Prisons served: 17
Participant count: 9	Participant count: 316	Participant count: 81	Prison workshops: 131
	Apprentices trained: 51		Participant count: 1,550
ATTICA Prison	GREENE Prison	ADIRONDACK AC	Apprentices trained: 107
Workshop count: 1	Workshop count: 9	Workshop count: 1	Inside (prisoner)
Participant count: 7	Participant count: 76	Participant count: 17	facilitators: 153
	Apprentices trained: 4		Outside (civilian)
AUBURN Prison	GROVELAND Prison	ALBANY Area Council	facilitators: 68
Workshop count: 16	Workshop count: 13	Workshop count: 3	
Participant count: 214	Participant count: 124	Participant count: 35	
Apprentices trained: 14	Apprentices trained: 9	Apprentices trained: 7	
ARTHUR KILL Prison	OTISVILLE Prison	CATSKILL Area Council	
Workshop count: 3	Workshop count: 4	Workshop count: 5	
Participant count: 45	Participant count: 47	Participant count: 54	
		Apprentices trained: 16	
BEDFORD HILLS Prison (W)	SING SING Prison	GENESEE VALLEY AC	2007 COMMUNITY WORKSHOP TOTALS:
Workshop count: 9	Workshop count: 27	Workshop count: 4	Community workshops: 26
Participant count: 130	Participant count: 321	Participant count: 32	Youth workshops: 5
	Apprentices trained: 8		Multigenerational: 3
DANBURY Federal Prison (W)	SULLIVAN Prison	NIAGARA FRONTIER AC	Adult workshops: 18
Workshop count: 1	Workshop count: 3	Workshop count: 5	Participant count: 286
Participant count: 19	Participant count: 34	Participant count: 66	Mini Workshops: 26
			Mini Youth Workshops: 24
EASTERN Prison	TACONIC Prison (Women's)	NEW YORK CITY AC	Mini Participant count: 508
Workshop count: 4	Workshop count: 1	Workshop count: 2	Adult apprentices trained: 24
Participant count: 54	Participant count: 12	Participant count: 19	Youth apprentices trained: 16
Apprentices trained: 10			Facilitators: 46
ELMIRA Prison	WENDE Prison	WESTCHESTER AC	
Workshop count: 3	Workshop count: 6	Workshop count: 6	
Participant count: 16	Participant count: 45	Participant count: 63	
	Apprentices trained: 11	Apprentices trained: 17	



ALTERNATIVES TO VIOLENCE PROJECT

AVP/NY
P.O. Box 353
8794 NY Route 90
King Ferry, NY 13081

Nonprofit Org.
U.S. Postage Paid
King Ferry, NY 13081
Permit No. 13383

Address Service Requested