



**November/
December
2008**

International Gathering in Kenya An Inspirational Experience

As many of you will know Kenya hosted the International AVP gathering this year. AVP - WA was fortunate to have one of our members Sally Hertzfeld attend. Sally has been inspired by the experience of attending and co-facilitating workshops while there. Some of you may have been lucky enough to hear her present at our November training night.

John Michaelis was the only other Australian delegate to attend he writes:

I was privileged to share in a workshop in a rural village that bordered the tribal areas of the Kikuyu and the Kalujin – the two largest tribes in Kenya. Forty three homes there had been razed to the ground, one woman was killed and much livestock and other valuables were stolen or destroyed. Thirteen representatives from each tribe were participants. Many of them

had lost their homes and property in the violence and were now living in tents. Attending also were several chiefs, senior officials from the area including a woman who was the local member of parliament. As the workshop progressed we saw that men and women who would not talk to one another were now eating and sharing together. People shared their fear, their bitter anger, their pain and their shattered hopes. They shared how families had been torn apart because husband and wife belonged to different tribes, how children who were best friends were banned from speaking to each other. By the time we reached the second day of the workshop we watched as members of the community pledged to rebuild lost homes, try to replace or restore property and to rebuild relationships that had broken apart. Wow!



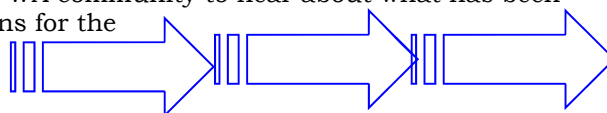
Banners made by Sally Hertzfeld being displayed



Sally and Esther participating in the hand washing ritual a common practice in Kenya

Come Celebrate the End of a Busy Year

The committee of AVP-WA wished to invite you to the end of year celebration. Please come and join the AVP-WA community to hear about what has been achieved this year, some plans for the next and last but not least have some fun, food and friendship.



*"Happiness is not a matter of events; it depends upon
the tides of the mind."
-Alice Meynell*

Celebrate!

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

When: Dec 11th 2008

Time: 6.00pm

*At: Quaker Meeting House
35 Clifton St. Mt Lawley*

*Bring a plate of food to
share*

Mind Your Language

I was inspired by the speech given by President Oscar Arias of Costa Rica at the Peace Jam 10th Anniversary Conference, Denver, Colorado 17 Sept 2006, published in the Theosophical Link Feb-Mar 2008, hence I wished to share it with AVP community in an abridged format.

...Thinking about the words we use is absolutely essential for Peace. If we want to establish peace, we must speak the language of peace. This is not easy as the forces of war have invaded our language without our knowing it. How often in your conversations have you had to "fight an uphill battle", "divide & conquer", "use our secret weapon", or "round up the troops?" How often have you called something a "war" – "price wars", "culture wars", "and a war with neighbours" - that really is not? How often have you heard our politicians say that they are "fighting" for lower taxes, "fighting" for national security, and "fighting" for social security?

The use of the language of war seems harmless, but using these words/phrases makes war part of everyday life. It makes the atrocious seem commonplace. Our words have consequences. The more we talk about the world in terms of violent conflict, the more we see the world in those terms. The more we see the world in violent terms the violence we are likely to see in the world. Thus we must do our best to eliminate the words of war from our vocabulary.

"Security" has been hijacked. There is more to keeping human beings safe than protecting them from other human beings. Security means recognising that the biggest killer in the world is heart disease, understanding that malaria is a mass-murderer and that AIDS is more ruthless than Al Qaeda. If we all worked towards a broader definition of security, a definition that included security against disease, hunger, a future impoverished of opportunity, then this perverse obsession of buying weapons would not continue.

There is just one way to change these definitions: through our own hard work. We must think of new phrases compatible with peace and use them. Let's not "fight" for things, let's work for them. Let's not "round up the troops", let's put a team together. When we talk of security, let's talk about public health. When we mention "special forces", let's mention doctors without borders. When we speak of "defence contractors", let's speak of the Red Cross.

In order to win a struggle over weapons, we must first win the struggle over words. It could be the beginning of a chain reaction and who knows how far it will go. Global change can start from within.

Our words have consequences, so I leave you with the Buddha's teaching. The thought manifests as the word; The word manifests as the deed; The deed develops into habit; And habit hardens into character. So watch the thought and its ways with care and let it spring from love born out of concern for all beings.

Bheena Sewnarain

AVP-WA 's Web Site Improvements

Did you know that AVP-WA has its very own web site. The site is currently undergoing some improvements that will able us to up date it at regular intervals.



In the near future you will be able to go to the site to view an updated calendar of events. You will be able to see what workshops are scheduled and who to contact if you wish to register interest in

facilitating. Dates and details of training days and nights will be provided as well as copies of the newsletters.

*There is no
road to peace
peace is the
road*

Ghandi

Workshop recommendations-August Acacia training day

About 18 facilitators gathered together in the Chapel at Acacia prison for a training session starting with an informal chat over a cup of tea. The issues we considered were central to the quality and integrity of AVP workshops. The stimulus for this was partly a perceived increase in disengaged and disruptive participants and partly as ongoing and informal self-evaluation and quality control.

After a welcome check-in, the gathering topic was what participant behaviour each of us found to be difficult and strategies we had to deal with that. It was a substantial topic for a gathering and lead well into a general discussion on workshop topics.

This discussion was introduced by referring to systems other groups have used to keep workshops on track and participants interested and focused. We were invited to ask ourselves why participants might be disruptive and what we should do about it. In no particular order the following points emerged.

Types of disruptive behaviour:

- ◆ Disrespect to others in the group laughing, talking whilst some else is speaking.
- ◆ Talking too often and for too long.
- ◆ Disengagement, poor body language, passing too often.
- ◆ Following the leader

Possible causes of disruptive be-

haviour:

- ◆ Doing the workshop only for parole
- ◆ Anxiety about repercussions outside the workshop
- ◆ Embarrassment
- ◆ Boredom
- ◆ Lack of comprehension
- ◆ Not relating to the material presented

How to deal with it?

Firstly we should ask ourselves if we are presenting the material in an interesting, understandable and dynamic manner - can we as individuals and as an organisation improve our facilitation and presentation style?

Secondly we should always remember that disruptive participants represent both a challenge and an opportunity. We are called to "walk the talk" and deal with disruption and conflict openly and honestly if we are to maintain credibility.

I think a step by step process emerged during the discussion which might often be an appropriate and graded way to tackle a dysfunctional workshop group.

1. It was agreed that the most important initial step was to have a bonded team working together, communicating well and supporting each other.
2. Minor annoyances and irrita-

tions can sometimes be dealt with by a reminder of the workshop guidelines to which the group has previously agreed.

3. A conflict between two individuals can sometimes be resolved by a facilitator talking to each separately and inviting them to reflect on what has happened. These conflicts can often be rich learning experiences for the individuals and the group.

4. More generalised dysfunction in the group can be opened up to the group with the agreement of the whole team. The facilitators should clearly and honestly state what the issues are in what way this is reducing the quality of the workshop, and ask what the group thinks should be done about it.

5. In the case of one or two uncooperative individuals it may be necessary to ask them to leave.

6. Ultimately a workshop can be stopped if the facilitators feel that nothing of value is happening and perhaps even that harm could occur.

Step six should only be taken reluctantly since it is often in the struggle for the way forward that transformation occurs. We should also be aware of the balance between our desire to control the workshop, the creativity that can happen when give individuals space to express themselves in their own way and the major responsibility of the team to provide a safe space for all participants.

Empathy

In the introduction it was pointed out that too often this becomes a problem solving exercise. In fact the way it is set up leads participants into that situation. For me this was a major learning point. In fact attempts at problem solving can be, usually is, detrimental to empathy. The focus of the exercise should be in trying to imagine how the other person feels, really taking on the problem, feeling and trying to articulate the emotions and difficulties. In the discussion of this exercise it is very important to encourage participants to speak and think about feelings, not solutions. Perhaps even trying to get them to explore the most basic emotions and the fundamental reasons for these. We should be clear about the difference between feelings and behaviours, clarifying this when it seems important without being too academic about it. It might be a good idea to have a brainstorm on "what are feelings?" prior to the exercise. Another idea might be to have a reflection type exercise where participants are asked to sit quietly and listen to a story and then try to empathise with the characters.

We agreed to try a modified version of this exercise in the next workshop and in the light of this explore it further in a community workshop.

From Jim Thom

Your invitation to become involved in AVP International

AVP-WA

Within the International Gathering itself many of us worked hard to figure out what should be the face and structure of AVP International to be able to respond to needs in today's often violent world. To insure that all voices were heard, we held a plenary session where all delegates chose a group that identified with their concern and vision for such an organization. These discussions fed into our working sessions, which were open to everyone. We worked hard to balance the needs of simplicity, effective communication and coordination, flat structure and limited resources. On the final day of the conference we met again in a plenary session to present an emerging structure and invited delegates to share their ideas and concerns and participate in the work ahead.

This letter is to share with the wider AVP community what was achieved, and to invite those not present at the gathering also to par-

ticipate in the visioning and in the tasks ahead. The committees are open to all of you who have the time and commitment to share your vision and wisdom with us. We have temporary conveners in place for each committee, but the clerks and co clerks for each committee will be decided when the committees meet for the first time.

Below is a summary of the key points developed at, and endorsed by, the conference. A copy of the full PowerPoint presentation is available at

www.avpinternational.org/ig2008/AVP-International-Coordinating-Committee.ppt. Please send an e-mail to the convener of the committee you are interested in participating in (may be more than one). Include any areas of particular interest to you, and whether you are willing to hold particular responsibility (Clerk, co-clerk, Treasurer etc.). The convener email addresses are embedded in blue in the text below:

Vision

A non-violent society where we all live in peace and dignity

Quaker Meeting House
35 Clifton St.
Mt Lawley

Phone: (08)9371 5407
E-mail:
avp_wa@bigpond.net.au
Post: PO Box 721 Mt Lawley

Mission

Gather and provide resources and services for the AVP community to reach and sustain our full potential for peace and nonviolence worldwide

Goals

- Mutual mentoring and support
- Communication
- Training and localised training materials
- Quality maintenance
- Funding
- New initiatives
- Ensure sustainability

For information and contact details of each of the committees please got to:

www.avpinternational.org/ig2008/AVP-International-Coordinating-Committee.ppt

2008 A Busy Year For AVP-WA

Have you ever found your self wondering what a year for AVP—WA looks like and what does AVP— achieve over a year. Well read on. 2008 has been a busy year teams of facilitators have presented numbers of workshops in 4 prisons, Acacia where workshops have been run for a number of years, Casuarina where workshops have not happened for a number of years and recommenced this year and workshops for the first time at Wooroloo and Karnet prisons.

Workshops in all 3 levels have been provided for members of the community and at primary and secondary schools. We now have student facilitators trained at Warnbro High and have held a very successful basic workshop at Darling Ridge Sports College. It is planned that both these schools will undertake workshops during 2009 resulting in more students having the opportunity to become facilitators enabling them to run workshops in the schools and if they choose, the community. The committee would like to congratulate Hamish Briggs, Sheridan Toms and Jamie Lee Munn student facilitators from Warnbro Community College who have just co-facilitated their first workshop for their fellow students. Congratulations to all the students and the staff who participated in the workshop at Darling Ridge Sports College we have been informed by a very reliable source that this was one of the best workshops ever. The facilitators report having a fantastic time.

All in all its been a great year with hundreds of people from different age groups and back grounds sharing in the AVP experience.