

# 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Restorative Justice Conference

**Sept 24, 2005 - Afternoon Panel/Forum assembled and lead by Ron Claassen**

## **Government Panel:**

Fresno County Superior Court Presiding Judge Edward Sarkisian, Civil Presiding Judge Mark Snauffer, Juvenile Judge Dale Ikeda, Probation Division Director/Juvenile - Phil Kader, County Supervisor Henry Perea Sr., Sheriff Richard Pierce, Deputy Chief of Police Sharon Shaffer, Former Director of the California Department of Corrections Jim Rowland.

## **Community Panel:**

Dan DeSantis - Fresno Regional Foundation, G.L. Johnson – Pastor of People’s Church, Dr. Arthur Wint – CSU Fresno, Kurt Madden – One by One Leadership, Deborah Odom – Vice Principal of Greenburg Elementary, Doug Noll – San Joaquin College of Law, Deborah Nankivell - CEO of the Fresno Business Council, Charlie Waters – Senior Vice President & Executive Editor of The Fresno Bee, Rick Gaston- President Black Political Council, Walt Parry - Fresno Metro Ministry and the Local Health Care Coalition.

## **Purpose:**

1. To reflect on and discuss the RJ New Zealand experience (as presented by Judge Fred McElrea of New Zealand, see attached overview) and *RJ City* (a proposal to work with all criminal cases in the most restorative way possible, created by the International Centre for Restorative Justice, presented by Dan Van Ness, see attached overview.)
2. To discuss and approve or modify the proposal below to seek legislation and funding to establish a Restorative Justice Pilot project for Fresno County.

## **Restorative Justice History in Fresno County**

1970’s - Victim Impact Statements introduced to the world by Fresno County.

1982 – Victim Offender Reconciliation Program (VORP) established in Fresno County.

VORP has worked successfully with more than 7000 cases focused primarily on youth and property offenses, but including some adults and cases including assaults, DUI, negligent homicide, pipe bombs, and many more.

1998 - On November 19, 1998, a forum of approximately 100 private and public sector community leaders gathered to further consider the possibility of restorative justice within Fresno County. They authorized a leadership group to provide direction for **“broad based systemic change based on restorative justice.”**

2001– The Restorative Justice Framework for Fresno introduced.

2003-2004 – Focus Groups (including diverse ethnic and religious groups, government, business and other community leaders) to consider RJ and legislation. Primary response, “Why aren’t we doing it already.” “We need this in Fresno County.”

2005 – County Board of Supervisors Legislative Platform (see below)

**ADOPTED COUNTY OF FRESNO  
STATE LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM 2005-2006  
(excerpts)**

INTRODUCTION This Legislative Platform is a statement of the goals and priorities of the Fresno County Board of Supervisors and establishes the basis for its advocacy efforts with the Executive and Legislative branches of the State of California.

**ACTION ITEM Pursue funding for a three-year pilot project in Fresno County to study the cost-saving benefits on the justice system of implementing a program for restorative justice.**

**PROPOSAL**

**(Developed and Presented by RJ Framework Committee)**

**Planning, Funding and Implementing  
Restorative Justice in Fresno County**

1. To seek **funding** for a one year **planning** process that includes all stakeholders in planning the Restorative Justice System (facilitated by the Restorative Justice Framework committee) and funding for **implementing** the pilot process.
2. To seek State **legislation** to establish a five year pilot implementing Restorative Justice in Fresno County that includes:
  - a. Structuring case management so most cases (appropriate exceptions) are offered the opportunity to utilize Victim Offender Dialogue or Community Justice Conference processes prior to or in lieu of court adjudication and/or sentencing (similar to NZ mandated model).
  - b. Working with all cases in the most restorative way possible (similar to RJ City model).
  - c. Creating a government/community partnership to provide dialogue/conferencing services,
  - d. Being guided by RJ Principles as described in Fresno RJ Framework.
3. To **implement** the Five Year Restorative Justice pilot project and **evaluate** its effectiveness.
4. To re-convene this panel/forum each year at the RJ Conference to:
  - a. Hear and discuss implementation progress, successes, and concerns.
  - b. At the end of the pilot period, 2011 RJ Conference, recommend next steps.

**Conclusion:** Based on the responses of the panel participants and the table discussion, the RJ Framework committee has a mandate to move forward with the proposal.