

Spring 2002

*Alternatives to Violence Project Newsletter for Facilitators*

# the TRANSFORMER



AVP as a *Healing Process*



## AVP as a Healing Process

**AVP** is usually seen as a violence prevention program. The major focus has been to help people learn better ways to manage their conflicts and resolve differences before they lead to violence. This has been the cornerstone of our prison program.

*But AVP is much more than a violence prevention program. It is an important tool to help people and societies heal after violent conflicts. In Croatia, Bosnia, Macedonia, Rwanda, Brundi and other war-torn areas, AVP workshops in conjunction with other trauma treatment methods has made an important contribution healing process.*

*AVP provides a powerful method to build community and offers a forum for people of differing backgrounds to come together and start to heal differences.*

## AVP in Ghana

by Jennie H. Allen

**W**est Africa has been in turmoil recently. The news from Liberia, Sierra Leone and Nigeria has not been good. Can a new educational venture succeed in West Africa?

Two people from suburban Scarsdale, New York had a dream of starting a Montisori School in Ghana, one of the few islands of stability in West Africa. And, John and Nana Randall have made their dream come true. Nana is originally from Ghana and she decided to use the property she owned in a suburb of her hometown of Kumasi, a city of over two million people. They started by building a small school building. Five years ago the John William Montessori School was started with just a first grade and it now has 400 students in eight grades and is expanding into high school.

Ghana has a growing middle class. Teachers, postal workers, businessmen and and shopkeepers are looking for a better education for their children. Many African societies don't have an adequate system of public education and the modest fees (by African standards) of the Montessori school make it affordable. Since Ghana has been rather prosperous, poor immigrants have been attracted from neighboring Togo and Ivory Coast . Conflict is part of the environment.

John and Nana decided that AVP would be helpful in dealing with conflict and building a sense of community. Since the school build-

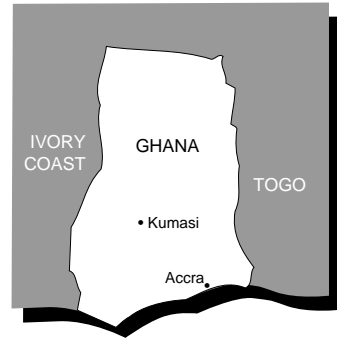
ings were standing empty in the summer, they thought it would be good to use them for AVP workshops. Four AVP facilitators including Rachel Harrison and Marcel Kitissou were invited to come to Ghana to conduct a series of AVP workshops. Marcel Kitissou of Togo is the Director of the Peace Education and Conflict Ethos Institute of Oswego (NY) State University, and, until recently, Clerk of the American Friends Service Committee in upstate New York.

The goal was to use AVP as an in-service enrichment for their teachers, and to build community between the teachers and parents. However, there was so much interest in the churches and mosques in the area that they had to limit attendance to two representatives per group. Basic, Advanced and Training for Trainers Workshops were conducted. And nineteen completed the Training for Trainers.

Rachel had never been to Africa and she worried about how ill-prepared she was to deal with a different culture. She says, "Like every culture I have learned about, some subjects are taboo; relationships do not always involve complete respect or good communication. People believe that violence is outside themselves and they have difficulty looking at inner demons or early experiences that have shaped them." She goes on to say, "In AVP workshops, it is clear that the mere presence of people from different backgrounds can help create a space to speak honestly from inside oneself rather than through a shared cultural norm."

Marcel has been living in the United States and facilitating AVP workshops in New York prisons. When asked about the cultural differences when working in Ghana, he said that no major adjustments in the Basic Workshop

were needed. The agenda worked as well in a community workshop in Ghana as in a prison in New York State. Thus, Marcel said, AVP methods



are embraced almost without change by Ghanans. They did make up their own songs last year, but the principles, including the idea of Transforming Power, are appreciated as presented.

Modern systems in African countries are collapsing and there is a trend back to old customs, including, in Ghana, traditional belief in the implementation of peace. John Randall pointed out that, in Ghana, marital conflicts are customarily mediated by a neutral, probably older, wise person.

Since the Training for Trainers workshop, the new facilitators have been meeting monthly to improve their skills. The goal is to make the AVP program self-supporting in Ghana. Additional workshops are being planned.

One of the problems with running the program is that there is little tradition in Africa (and in many other parts of the world) of volunteerism as we know it. In the US, participants usually pay for their training, in Ghana, meals and materials must be furnished. This is chiefly underwritten by the Randalls, but transportation including international travel must be provided. Funds are needed for travel costs

# A Journey to Rwanda



**R**wanda is very small (smaller than Belgium) and suffered the horrors of genocide war in 1994 and 1995 when almost a million Tutsis and moderate Hutu died. Teachers killed their pupils, doctors killed their patients, neighbors killed their friends, pastors killed their congregations and, ultimate horror, mothers were given the option their own children if she married a Tutsi or to be killed with them.

*by Elizabeth Oldham*

This incomprehensible violence has left a country whose prevailing aura is one of great sadness. It also left a country full of well-intentioned N.G.O.'s, Unicef, Oxfam, Christian Aid, the Mennonite Foundation, Peace Now, etc. of which I suppose AVP was one. The shiny SUVs of these organizations are seen everywhere dipping in and swaying over the red dirt roads, bouncing in and out of pot holes in the few tarmac roads.

I was part of a four person team (two men and two women) who went to Rwanda for five weeks from February 25th to April 1st 2001 to conduct Alternatives to Violence workshops and train facilitators to carry on the work after we left. We were joined by two experienced facilitators from AVP-Uganda.

We road the local mini-vans for a few cents a ride. We discovered that twenty four people can be packed into one van plus chickens, TVs in boxes, huge plastic bags and still survive..

Arrangements had been made through the Evangelical Quaker Churches and many of the participants came through them. This resulted in a rather homogeneous population—mostly Protestant, it was disappointing that we did not have more Catholics and Muslims. We had specifically asked that women be included and there were, but very few.

We had two experienced facilitators from Uganda and between the six of us we conducted three Basic Workshops, three Advanced and three Training for Trainers and three Basics where the new facilitators were in charge and we backed them up.

Although our headquarters was in Kigali (the capital) we went all over the country. I was lucky enough to go to Ruhengeri (near the Mountains of the Moon) and to Cyangugu on Lake Kivu near the Congolese border.

We had hoped to see the mountain gorillas at Ruhengeri paut it would have cost three hundred dollars for us. Instead we saw a lot of "pastors" and other city dwellers. Pastors are as common as cows in Rwanda and at one point while playing "The Big Wind Blows," everyone who was a pastor, or "pasta" as it is pronounced, was asked to change places, and half the room did so.

Good translation was crucial and in my first workshop we had a wonderful Congolese girl called Zawadi, fluent in French, English, Kinyanwanda (the local language), and of

course her own. She threw herself into the task body and soul and ended up taking the workshop. After Zawadi we were spoiled and very dismayed to discover our next translator, a more or less political appointment (somebody's nephew), spoke bad English and apparently didn't speak much Kinyanwanda either judging by the bafflement on people's faces. It turned out that he was from Brundi. Luckily there were people in the workshop who were actually Rwandan and spoke better English than he did.

One of the few women in the workshop was Josephine, who had been sent by the local "pasta" to help out in the kitchen and who ended up as a facilitator! The chauffeur of one of the richer men asked if he could join in because he was bored with sitting in the car, he was a valuable contributor and took the Advanced Workshop for good measure. At first the women were quiet and shy, but eventually, in the encouraging and welcoming atmosphere, welcomed and encouraged not only by us but by the majority of the men also, blossomed like a rose. One of them was elected to play the part of the President in the exercise "Building a New Rwanda" and did it so well and with such authority that afterwards everyone came and shook her hand and congratulated her.

All the workshops were full and more kept arriving, apparently this was a good sign since normally people would drift away.

Our way was smoothed by Briget Butt of the Mennonite Foundation—an old Africa hand at the advanced age of thirty-six, she gave us some valuable insights into the Rwandan culture and thinking, i.e., we were puzzled by the persistent questions about what AVP really

was. We explained over and over but no-one was satisfied. Brigit showed us the confusion that resulted from our adoption of workshop names. We asked that people choose a positive adjective that began with the first letter of their first names. For example, I was Loyal Liz. People choose extraordinary names like "God's Grace Peter" or "Emanuel Immacule." It transpired that they thought that we might be some sort of a cult and that these would be their "baptismal" names. This difficulty was further exacerbated by the lack of names for emotions in Kinyarwanda; people have to act out to show how they feel. Without Brigit we would have sailed confidently on, not knowing about these serious misunderstandings.

AVP is not a chalk and talk kind of experience, the participants engage in small and large group activities, they make up role plays and have lively games. This was something entirely new to the Rwandans. At first we had to almost literally take their notebooks from them and they were always to be found at breaks and lunch times earnestly copying things down. Our two colleagues who joined us from Uganda were experienced facilitators, thanks to the African Great Lakes Initiative and were a wonderful part of our team.

The work we did was valuable; seeds have been planted that will need to be watered and cultivated for AVP to take hold adequately. The people who came to the workshops learned a lot, and they thoroughly enjoyed it but the team learned a great deal more. I am so grateful to David Zarembka who organized everything and for the great kindness and help we were given by the people of Rwanda. I have been blessed with several life-changing experiences and this is one of them.

# Alternatives to Violence, Conflict Prevention in Nigeria



**O**ur society is one of the most violent in the world. Riots in Lagos, the looting of the university, ethnic strife in the Niger delta, intercommunal clashes in Kaduna - violence here knows no limits." Iyke Chiemeka speaks quickly, as if forever in a hurry. Surulere is a district like so many others in Lagos: people have lost count of the number of power failures; telephone lines (for those who are lucky enough to have one) are out of service; unemployment is rife; and everyone is struggling to survive.

*by Iolanda Jaquemet*

A large iron gate, which is closed at 6 p.m. every evening, bars the road that leads to Iyke's office. It is an essential security measure. In early April, press reports told of a row over a water source in a region of western Nigeria suffering from drought that had degenerated into a pitched battle between students and villagers. Twenty people were wounded.

## Another path

Convinced that "we must reduce violence by any means possible", Iyke Chiemeka believes she holds the key: a technique for resolving conflicts peacefully, first developed in 1975 in a high-security prison in the state of New York. Having been a runaway success on its home ground, the Alternatives to Violence

Project (AVP) has been imported into dozens of countries on six continents. It was in one of these, the United Kingdom, that Uju Agomoh, the dynamic director of a Nigerian NGO assisting prison inmates (PRAWA), first learned of the project while at a conference.

In 1998, British AVP specialists arrived in Nigeria to train the first handful of pioneers. The Nigerian branch of the AVP was born. Since then, hand in hand with PRAWA, it has been organizing more and more three-day workshops designed to "enable participants to free themselves of the burden of violence" - a burden that they carry within themselves. This applies not only to people in prison but outside, in particular the 'area boys', as they are known in Nigeria: the 'bad boys', petty racketeers and gang leaders - unemployed youths ripe for any mischief.

In 1999, Jean-Jacques Gacond, head of the International Red Cross, Red Crescent (ICRC) regional delegation in Nigeria, was introduced to the idea. "I was instantly captivated by the approach," he relates. "For once, instead of acting as fire-fighters, we could try to tackle the root causes of violence." After observing an AVP workshop, Jean-Jacques decided to give it a go - "a sort of trial run" - by financing seven three-day sessions between January and August 2000.

## An unhappy birthday

A tiny baby girl is quietly asleep on a young woman's shoulder. She was born two weeks ago in military camp No. 44 in Kaduna, where her mother and two sisters sought refuge on 21 February. That was the day when riots opposing Christians and Muslims broke out in this northern Nigerian town following a proposal to introduce sharia law in Kaduna state. The violence claimed hundreds of victims in Kaduna and subsequently in the south-east of the country, leaving this baby in camp 44 without a father. In Kaduna, whole districts have been reduced to a tangle of blocks and metal blackened by flames.

## Group dynamics

It is Friday morning. A fresh workshop is about to start. The participants crowd into the small meeting room on the ground floor of the building in Surulere which houses PRAWA's offices. There are 20 participants, along with five National Society volunteers from the Lagos branch, and as many facilitators trained in the AVP method. Women are a distinct minority; there are three of them as opposed to 27 men.

The group dynamics do not flag over the next few days. The facilitators are extremely professional: under their guidance, small group sessions, plenary discussions and role-plays follow smoothly one after the other. Skillfully, they put the most timid at ease and build the confidence of each contributor.

Alhaji Kazeem Mammodou, a gentle giant in a white embroidered robe, recounts his own transformation: "Before becoming a facilitator, I was incapable of saying sorry to my wife, even if I was obviously in the wrong." Tongues are loosened and people recount

how they were involved in violent situations and found peaceful ways of resolving them: family quarrels, disputes over property, battered women, clashes between police and street gangs, a mini riot by women in front of a dispensary that has run out of tuberculosis vaccines, etc. It is as if the whole of Nigeria, in all its painful reality, is concentrated here in this tiny room.

Peace, a small slip of a woman who works in the prison administration, suggests an exercise: "You have three minutes to decide what you would do if caught, on foot, between two gangs of youngsters converging on you armed with knives." "I'd hitch up my trousers and pretend to be one of them and run away at the first opportunity," says an elderly man. The participants break into good-natured laughter, then clap. But pacifism has its limits.

The next hypothetical situation touches a more sensitive issue: theft. "You arrive home one day and find an intruder leaving your room with a bar of soap in his hand. What do you do?" "I know how things are at the moment," says a round-faced young man, "but that's no excuse! I'd grab the guy and ask him what he's doing in my house. And if he won't cooperate, I'd call the police." There is general approval.

All agree that it would be better not to shout to alert the neighbours, a move that often ends with the robber being lynched, preferably burned alive with a tire around his neck.

The rules of the game are typical of this kind of workshop: boosting self-esteem, learning to listen without interrupting, respecting others and understanding that each and every person, however humble, has a role to play in society. "It's a bit like Alcoholics Anonymous

adapted to violence," smiles a sociologist. "But it works!" "The aim is not to teach people what they should do, but to make them aware of the potential within each one of us, to show them that their energy - for it is a prerequisite of violence - can be transformed into positive energy," stresses Uju Agomoh, director of PRAWA.

The group dynamics work so well and 'positive thinking' is so well entrenched that it is hard not to forget that some of the participants are anything but angelic. One of them has been sentenced to six years in prison for heroin trafficking; another one is the leader of a gang of bus racketeers. There was a man at a previous session who had killed six people in the riot that followed the death of opposition leader Moshood Abiola in 1998. All the participants have chosen to come of their own accord. The material rewards are few: the AVP pays their transport, provides a meal and gives them a T-shirt. They come rather, as "Felix the blessed" says, "because I know that I can change myself, and that may help to change the world a tiny bit."

Iyke has a dream that the AVP initiative will snowball (even if the image seems incongruous in this warm climate). "We need to train at least 30 facilitators in each of the 37 Nigerian states to achieve something," she says. Jean-Jacques Gacond is reserving judgement until the end of the pilot project. But he admits to being touched when "a gang leader told me that he would like us to go to the marketplaces together to promote the ideas among his young followers."

*Iolanda Jaquemet is a freelance journalist based in Geneva.*

## In Memory of Marjorie Kerr



**A**nother of our AVP stalwarts has departed this vale.

Marjorie Kerr, our most recent, and last Executive Director of AVP-USA, died in Hospice on February 13, after battling cancer for the past 3 years. Marjorie is warmly remembered for her unselfish dedication to helping others. Marjorie's careers took many turns including counseling people in need and most recently as the CEO of the Anti-Violence Project. She took great joy in animals, and rescued many animals including her dear cats and a loving friendly dog.

Those of us who attended last year's Annual Gathering will remember our joyous surprise to see her heartfelt and enthusiastic return. She was a real spark for and lived for AVP, and will be sorely missed

To the end, Marjorie never let go of her idealism, irrepressible optimism and love for people. Marjorie is survived by her loving mother, Hazel Kerr, and her beloved sister Kathleen Kerr.

Donations may be made to the Hefer Project international, PO Box 1692, Merrifield, VA 22116; of Hospice at the Texas Medical Center, 1905 Holcombe Blvd., Houston, TX 77030; or St. Lukes Texas Cancer Institute, 6720 Berliner, Houston, TX 77030.



# AVP-USA National Gathering

## *Memorial Day Weekend 2002*

**I**t was great how the East and West AVPers got together last year in Colorado. Let's make it happen again in Virginia in 2002! The conference will begin on Friday evening, May 24 and will run through Monday noon, May 27.

The keynote speaker will be Carl Mays, who is an absolutely incredible motivational speaker. His theme will be a "Strategy for Winning" and it will include two presentations. The goal is to find new energy for ourselves and for our work. This is an exceptional opportunity to learn how to strengthen ourselves and our organization. After his talks, there will an opportunity to engage with him in discussing applications to AVP and to life. His books include "Strategy for Winning," "Anatomy of a Leader," and "Prayers from the Heart." He has spoken to over 2,000 groups. Don't miss this event!

We also expect the program to include:

- Mini-workshops on a variety of topics
- A panel of ex-offenders discussing transition issues
- Exercises from the new Basic Manual
- Ex-offenders who go back in to facilitator workshops
- New developments for youth workshops
- Using "Houses of Healing" as a resource
- Committee meetings: Education, Communication, etc.
- Annual AVP-USA Business Meeting



There will also be opportunities to make connections and network with other AVPers in your region and across the country.

We'd love your suggestions or agendas for workshops. Please let us know early if you are interested in running a workshop of any sort. There is plenty of room for them at Camp Hanover! Nancy Penney has agreed to handle another dance segment on either Saturday or Sunday night (a big hit in Colorado).

The Camp Hanover Retreat Center is located 14 miles northeast of downtown Richmond, Virginia, on 595 acres of beautiful rolling woodland. There is a beautiful 14-acre lake, open fields for games and trails winding through the woods. Hikers will find wildflowers birds and wildlife. The facilities include three lodges, meeting rooms and a dining hall to accommodate 150 guests. There is a solar heated outdoor pool, picnic pavilions and campfire circles.

### **Registration**

The cost of the conference will be \$175.00 This will include seven meals in the dining room and two light meals as well as lodging for three nights. The registration fee is \$40.00

**Please register today!**

**See the registration form on the next page.**

## 2002 AVP-USA Annual Meeting Registration Form

The Camp Hanover Retreat Center, Richmond, Virginia, May 24 to 27, 2002

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Adjective name \_\_\_\_\_ Sex \_\_\_\_\_

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Non-refundable deposit enclosed, \$40 for each participant due by March 17th -- please fill out separate forms for persons with different addresses.

Full registration enclosed, \$175 (including deposit) Fees cover 3 nights lodging, 9 meals, shuttle transportation between Richmond airport & conference site.

Not staying overnight, \$35 per day \_\_\_\_\_ Saturday, \_\_\_\_\_ Sunday for meals and conference attendance. *Note: We must have this information in advance for sufficient meal preparation.*

Arriving Saturday morning, staying overnight, leaving Sunday evening, \$105.

Arriving Saturday morning, staying overnight Saturday and Sunday night, leaving Monday \$130.

Pick up at airport: Date & time \_\_\_\_\_  
Airline \_\_\_\_\_ Flight \_\_\_\_\_

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Scholarship funds matched by local group sponsor

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\* Some scholarships are available with matching local support.

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\* Travel expenses are not covered.

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Please return this Registration Form with your \$40 deposit to:

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# Beyond the Family Sculpting Exercise.

## Building Blocks Brainstorm

If you wish to focus on family issues in a workshop, the Sculpting Exercise is a powerful tool. The exercise provides helpful insight about family structure and generally provides a dramatic portrait of a dysfunctional family. Although the Sculpting Exercise presents vivid image of family problems, it does not provide a solution. Two approaches toward providing a solution are:

### Rerun the Sculpture

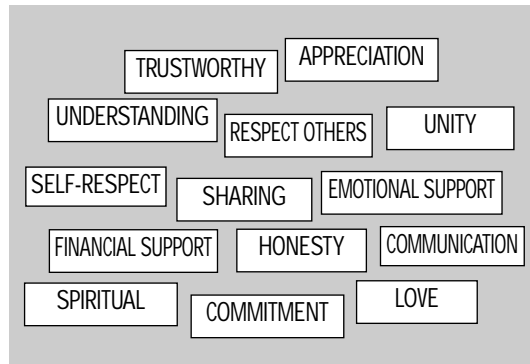
After debriefing the players in the first sculpture, ask the group to rearrange the players as a positive family. How should the members of the family relate to each other physically? The group may also want to give the players one phrase that they can all repeat to express their unity as a family.

### Building Blocks Brainstorm

Prepare materials by folding a dozen or more 8 1/2 x 11 sheets of paper lengthwise and tear

them in half so you have a number of 4 1/2 x 11 sheets about the size of a brick. Then ask the group to brainstorm the building blocks to a healthy family. Write each item on a separate “brick” and place the sheets on the floor in the center of the room. After a dozen or more sheets have been completed, ask the group to arrange the “bricks” in order with some forming the foundation and others on the second or third level.

Then ask participants to brainstorm “steps” they can take right now to building a healthy family. Write each one on a separate sheet of paper and ask participants to place each “step” near the brick that it is related to. After the construction is complete, debrief the exercise.



# Help Along the Way

**T**hink of a conflict you're working on right now that you would like to look at in a different way...

- Who are the people in the conflict...
- Where does the conflict take place...
- What caused the conflict...
- What are the issues in the conflict...
- Does the other person want to resolve the conflict...
- What are the obstacles to resolving this conflict...
- How soon do you want to resolve this conflict...
- Is this conflict similar to a previous one...
- It what ways is it different from previous conflicts...
- What messages do you hear form the past...
- How did you resolve the previous conflict...
- Who helped you then...
- Who can help you now...

How can they help to resolve the conflict...

How can you help yourself...

What's holding you back from resolution...

What do you gain by not resolving it...

What are the consequences if you don't resolve this conflict...

What can you learn about yourself from this conflict...

How does your Inner Light or Inner Wisdom tell you to resolve this conflict...

This may be followed by a small group discussions were participoants may share resources they have discovered during the meditation.

Brainstorm on Newsprint

# How to order AVP Manuals & Publications

<b>Publications:</b>	Price	Quantity
Basic Manual	7.50	_____
Advanced (2nd Level)	10.00	_____
Training for Trainers	10.00	_____
Supplement to Basic & Adv.	10.00	_____
AVP Organizing Kit	10.00	_____
Youth Manual	10.00	_____
Video (VHS Format) aprox. 1 hour including 27 minute Belly of the Beast and 12 minute segments showing AVP, HIPP & RAVE	30.00	_____
Chicken Soup for the Prisoner's Soul	12.95	_____
Spanish Basic Manuals		
Bogota Columbia Basic (I'm told this is a reasonably literal translation.)	15.00	_____
CEPPA Costa Rica Basic (I'm told this is a more idiomatic translation.)	20.00	_____
New Jersey Basic Exercises (This is not a complete Basic Manual, just the Basic Exercises which were translated by inmates at FCI Fort Dix in New Jersey.)	5.00	_____

All manuals are sent as loose leaf pages except the Youth Manual, which is a bound paperback book. If you would prefer the Youth Manual as loose 3 hole punched pages, please indicate "loose pages" on your order.

## Shipping Charges:

Indicate "Priority Mail" or "Media Mail" on your order.  
 Priority Mail - \$4.00 for first item, \$1.20 for each additional item.  
 normally 3 to 5 days.  
 Media Mail - \$2.00 for first item, \$.50 for each additional item.  
 normally 7 to 14 days

Please contact Alan for shipping costs outside the USA or for quantities over 10 manuals, since shipping costs begin to vary widely depending upon weight and distance.

<b>Additional Postpaid items:</b>	Price	Quantity
Pendle Hill Pamphlet- Nonviolence & Community	\$3.00/ea	_____
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AVP/USA By-Laws & Policy Guide:	\$1.00/ea	_____
Custom Printed items:		
*AVP National Brochure	\$15.00/C	_____
*Custom Printed Certificates	\$20.00/C	_____

\*These items can be customized for your council or group \$15 one-time setup on first order. Contact Alan Taplow for details on customizing

## All orders must be prepaid

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 Plainfield, VT 05667

For inquiries or additional information:  
 Alan Taplow, 802-454-4675 ataplow@bigfoot.com

## Take a trip to the AVP Web Sites

The best way to find out what's happening in AVP is to log onto the AVP-USA website.

There you will find links to local AVP websites in the USA, including Delaware Valley, New Hampshire, Miami, Tallahassee, Minnesota, Bay Area and Washington State.

There are also links to the AVP International website and connections to more than a dozen countries around the world.

### AVP/USA Web Site

<http://www.avpusa.org>

*The AVP/USA Website has a new Members only Area. To enter the Members Page, you need:*

*User Name*

*Password*

*(NOTE: The above are case-sensitive).*

*This page is for AVP Facilitators only. Please maintain the confidentiality of the Password.*

### AVP-International New Web Site Address

<http://www.avpi.freemove.co.uk>

### AVP-New Hampshire Web Site

<http://www.avpnh.org>

### AVP-Miami Web Site

<http://www.homestead.com/avpmiami>

### AVP-Minnesota Web Site

<http://www.fnvw.org> (new address)

### AVP-Bay Area California Web Site

[www.webcom.com/~peace/PEACTREE/avp/homepage.html](http://www.webcom.com/~peace/PEACTREE/avp/homepage.html)

## Has your Transformer Subscription Expired?

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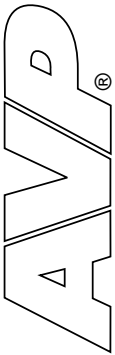
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Articles inside...

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The Transformer is the AVP-USA newsletter for facilitators. Articles are welcome.

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