



Date: May 20, 2008

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Councilmember Tonia Reyes Uranga, Seventh District *(TRU)*

Subject: **AGENDA ITEM: Proclamation honoring Volunteers in Parole (VIP) Mentoring Program**

VIP was founded in response to a challenge by U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice Warren E. Burger, asking attorneys to dedicate some portion of their time and special skills to helping the criminal justice system become "something more than a revolving-door." Initially a community service program of the State Bar of California, VIP became a separate nonprofit in 1991. The VIP mission combines the humanitarian goal of salvaging human lives with the social and economic benefits of building better and safer communities.

VIP is the only organization in California that recruits, matches and assists attorneys to mentor parolees when they return to the community. For most parolees, the transition back to the community is more difficult than being incarcerated. Without mentors, the parolee success rate is only 30%. Many get trapped again in a life of crime. But more than 70% of the parolees with VIP mentors are successful on parole. Only 1% of all American mentoring programs accept the challenge of providing a future to an at-risk segment of our community that literally has no future.

VIP has 13 programs throughout the state for California Department of Corrections and California Youth Authority parolees. The key component of VIP is the one-on-one relationship with a mentor. Volunteer attorney mentors check in with their parolees every week and spend between three to five hours a month on activities that range from cultural and educational to sports or just hanging out. They offer friendship as well as practical advice. Most important, they serve as someone with whom parolees can share success, analyze setbacks, learn how to cope with crisis, and expand horizons. Mentors do not lend money or provide legal representation.

Recommendation: To approve the proclamation honoring the work and dedication of the mentors of VIP for their success in our community over the last four decades.

cwa