



Face To Face

The Resolution Center Newsletter

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Mediators Gather For The Offender's Perspective

Resolution Center volunteers, potential volunteers and others interested in victim-offender mediation gathered together Dec. 5, 2002 to socialize and to learn more about mediation from the offender's perspective.

Our speaker for the night was Donis Morris, mediator and former Superintendent at McLaughlin Youth Center. Donis began working with juvenile offenders in 1970, and before her retirement in 2000, she initiated one of the nation's first victim-offender mediation programs (VOMP) at a juvenile institution. She was also a member of the team that started The Resolution Center.

Donis shared her early experiences with bringing together victims and offenders. A crime victim was curious about what happened at McLaughlin Youth Center and asked Donis what they did to serve victims. "I didn't know what to tell her," said Donis. "The answer was 'nothing.'" Out of a desire to serve both crime victims *and* juvenile offenders, Donis turned to victim-offender mediation.

Donis shared that offenders often agree to mediation because they feel they have an obligation to the people they have harmed. Meeting the victim is a way for them to repair the harm. Not all offenders reach the point where they can feel guilt for their actions and empathize with the victim. But then, mediation is not for all offenders. It is the willingness and responsibility of the participants and not the severity of the crime that determines a case's eligibility for mediation.

Donis also shared about mediations with adults who committed violent crimes. Three years

ago, she facilitated the meeting of a man convicted of a triple homicide with a relative of the victims. These cases require months of preparation on the part of the mediators and years on the part of the participants. In this case, approximately 14 years had passed between the murders and the mediation.

The event also gave prospective volunteers the opportunity to become more familiar with mediation and to meet some experienced victim-offender mediators.

Year 2002 In Review

In 2002, a total of 35 volunteers contributed 276.5 hours to The Resolution Center. Eight new volunteers were trained as mediators.

We received 58 victim-offender referrals. Of those 58, 29 were closed without mediation, 13 went to mediation, and 16 were still open at the end of the year. Reasons for closure without mediation include: Victim declined (12), Offender declined (2), Inability to contact parties (13), Inappropriate for mediation (2).

Only one mediation was terminated without an agreement. The other mediations resulted in agreements totaling \$10,002.49 in restitution and 100 hours of community service. Five of them included apologies, and two of those mediations involved no further restitution.

We also had 15 referrals for parent-adolescent mediation and three mediations. Six cases were referred by Anchorage Youth Court and eight were self-referrals.

Face To Face is a publication of The Resolution Center, a nonprofit community-based dispute resolution resource offering victim-offender, parent-adolescent and neighborhood mediation.

Mediators Come Together

Volunteers of The Resolution Center now have the opportunity to meet face to face with other mediators in Anchorage.

The Resolution Center, the Alaska Dispute Settlement Association, and the Alternate Dispute Resolution Section of the Alaska Bar Association are all pleased to announce the commencement of a series of jointly sponsored monthly speaker's meetings on the subject of alternate dispute resolution.

These luncheons are a valuable way to keep connected to other volunteers, to meet new people and to stay updated on current trends and practices in mediation.

The first meeting was held Feb. 5 and was attended by over 20 local mediators. Representatives of the three sponsoring organizations spoke on the topic of *Mediation, Facilitation, and Alternate Dispute Resolution in Alaska - The State of Our Profession*.



Eloise Caribou and Herb Ross listen intently at the March speaker's luncheon.

These speaker's meetings are free and are open to members of the public. Bring your own brown bag lunch, or simply come to learn about topics of interest to the dispute resolution community in Alaska.

They will meet at noon on the first Wednesday of the month. For locations, contact The Resolution Center. The topic for the April meeting is mediation and the court system with speakers Judge Elaine Andrews and Karen Largent.

Volunteers Put The Civility Into Civil Suits

The Victim-Offender Mediation Program is not the only program looking for volunteer mediators. If you would like to practice your skills, contribute to the community and help people transform conflicts, consider volunteering with the Small Claims Mediation Program.

This program is an initiative by mediators and lawyers to assist the state District Court in Anchorage in handling its small claims calendar. The calendars are generally set for Thursdays, with sessions at 8:30 a.m. and 10:00 a.m.

When people bring their lawsuits to court, the judge may require them to attempt mediation before he or she hears the case. If the parties do not reach a mutually satisfactory agreement, then the lawsuit goes before the judge. If the case is decided by the judge, there is usually a happy winner and an unhappy loser. Mediation offers the disputants the power to craft a resolution that satis-

fies both parties. About two-thirds of the referred cases are settled in mediation.

The Small Claims Mediation Program seeks volunteers who have already had some basic mediation training such as that offered by The Resolution Center. The time commitment is only one to three hours on Thursday mornings. If you have had no training, the program invites you to participate as an observer (with the permission of the parties) to see how mediation works. This is helpful if you are considering mediation training.

This is an excellent opportunity for new mediators to get practice, and for experienced mediators to both serve justice and to mentor newer practitioners.

For more information or to volunteer, call the program coordinator, Rick Barrier, at 250-5698.

Videos For Loan

The Resolution Center has a number of videos available for loan. The following is a partial listing of videos on restorative justice.

“Restoring Justice” — 59 min.

A very good portrayal of restorative justice. It showcases many different approaches from many communities, including: mediation, prisoner re-entry, community service, and community policing.

“Restorative Justice: For Victims, Communities, and Offenders” — 25 min.

This is a shorter, edited version of “Restoring Justice.” (above)

“Restorative Justice: Victim Empowerment Through Mediation and Dialogue” — 25 min.

A Mark Umbreit video about VOMP, with an emphasis on the victim. Experiences of three victims.

“The Visionaries, Parts 1 and 2” — 30 min. each

Focuses on community mediation. Part 1 has a bit on VOMP and Study Circles on Racism. Part 2 is a case study of a community-wide dispute involving public land use.

“ABC 20/20 News: “Restorative Justice”; Save Our Streets: “Making Amends”; Interview with Elizabeth Menkin, M.D.” — 60 min.

This video contains three programs. The 20/20 piece describes first a vandalism mediation, then a mediation involving a drunken driving death. The second program is also a story on the same incident. The third program is post-mediation interview with the sister of the woman who died in that car crash. This video is very victim-sensitive and illustrates what victims can get out of mediation.

“Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction: Victim Offender Dialogue” — 22 min.

This short video shows a mediation between the mother of a murder victim and an offender who was involved in the offense. It is a good introduction to mediations with institutionalized offenders.



Participants of the January 2003 VOMP Training: (back, l-r) Randy Lewis, Jodi Boyles, John Rumps, trainer Drew Peterson, Charlene Yurman, (front, l-r) Brenda Parnell, Jocelyn Liebig, Marcy Noren, Susan Beal. Not pictured: Kristi Kleaver and Lynn Moore.

New Mediators Trained

Ten new mediators joined the volunteer corps at The Resolution Center after completing the victim-offender mediation training held January 28-Feb. 1.

The January 2003 “graduating class” includes Jodi Boyles, Randy Lewis, Jocelyn Liebig, Lynn Moore, Marcia Noren, Charlene Yurman, John Rumps, Susan Beal, Brenda Parnell, and Kristi Kleaver.

Special thanks to mediator Drew Peterson and juvenile probation officer Matt Callahan for their assistance.

Funding Sources Shrink

As Juneau tightens the purse strings, The Resolution Center will be feeling the squeeze.

Gov. Frank Murkowski’s budget for FY 2004 eliminates the Human Services Matching Grant. This grant to the Municipality of Anchorage provides over \$1 million for over 30 local agencies, including The Resolution Center.

The Center will also be missing out on a share of the federal Juvenile Accountability Incentive Block Grant. This is a grant given to the state of Alaska to distribute. In years past, The Resolution Center has received \$30,000 a year. But starting July 1, the only diversionary programs to be funded will be youth courts and community panels.

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A Program of Volunteers of America Alaska



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