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Students from Iraq Receive Education in Peer Mediation

Students of high school age, approximately 15-17 years old, tend to have a vitality and eagerness about them that is universal. This was evident in a group of Iraqi students to whom I made a presentation about Peer Mediation on August 27 at UNR. The youth were hosted by the Northern Nevada International Center.

These students were on a youth exchange program from provinces around Iraq . They were interested in learning about programs that promote peace and that could be taken back to their respective schools and organizations.

It was interesting that although these students were unknown to each other before their trip, they seemed to have become a tight-knit and cohesive group in a short period of time. Reno was their second city to visit in a four week trip.

~Nancy Dyer, NMC Youth Committee, Mediator & Volunteer Court Coordinator

Mediator on the Street

Mediators can sometimes be similar to superheroes in that they can help people in conflict overcome situations that they thought were never going to be resolved. What "superpower" skill do you use in mediation?



I think my 20 years of experience as a paralegal is one of my biggest assets as a mediator. While a knowledge of the law is not a necessary trait for a mediator, I believe that for me, as a new mediator, it is beneficial because it provides me with a confidence that I would not have otherwise. I think that the parties to mediation can sense a confidence in me that helps them have confidence in the process.—**Ann Wilson**



I am a good listener. The technique of active listening in a mediation means not just paraphrasing what's been said; sometimes it means listening closely enough to *notice what has not been heard*. I will play the Columbo role (a bit confused, unable to keep up) and say: "Excuse me – would you say that again? I didn't quite get that," when, in fact, I heard a key point perfectly well. It is a useful technique to help a disputant clarify her position or reiterate pertinent information. A good listener helps others listen well.—**Sandra Delehanty**



One of the tools I like to use is reflexive listening (We all use this tool). After both parties have shared their points of view, I like to summarize both points of view and share what I hear are things that may be the common enemy (problem). Sometimes this points out that neither party has any control of a problem. This sometimes allows the two parties to realize that they are not against each other. Sometimes this often leads to agreeing on the problem which helps the parties share information that is really the reason for their differences leading the parties back to the positive relationship they had before the problem came about that they could not control.—**Buzz Harris**

Mediator on the Street is a new column that invites mediator participation. The column offers a space for mediators to share their skills and experience with others. Mediators are encouraged to send submissions for the December NMC newsletter to cwahl@mediatenmc.org. The deadline for contributions is December 11.

The question for the next issue: ***What is the most unexpected situation you've found yourself in, personally or professionally outside of mediation, where you have engaged your mediation skills?***

NMC Board Chair Profile

John Albrecht

I graduated from law school in 1976. I have been practicing law continuously since then except working for five years at the National Judicial College here in Reno. I have been on the Board of the Neighborhood Mediation Center for many years, starting when Tripp Barthel was executive director.

One of my regrets is not taking an alternative dispute resolution (ADR) course while in law school. Mediation is simply one form of ADR. I have spent many hours preparing and participating in mediations while practicing law. I have settled many more cases through mediation than I have through contested court hearings.

Much of my current practice is in employment law. The federal courts, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, and the Nevada Equal Rights Commission all have some form of mediation programs. Most often, the cases before the federal court or those agencies settle in mediation or are settled soon afterwards based upon the help the parties received from mediators.

The work that the Neighborhood Mediation Center's mediators do to help individuals in disputes in small claims court is very important. As important as settling a specific case is maintaining a relationship between the parties. A mediator is able to assist the parties to settling the dispute from being adversarial and to help maintain or make it easier to re-establish a friendship or relationship after the dispute is resolved.

In addition, mediation saves court time. Early in my career I was a justice of the peace in a rural county in Montana. I heard and decided many small claims court cases. I recognize that if the parties in those disputes had had the opportunity to use mediation the disputes would likely have settled and not required a formal court hearing.

I want to thank all of the NMC mediators who work in this program.



“Most often, mediators help the parties identify the real issues in disagreement. From there, the matter is very likely to settle.”

Help ACR Fundraise!

The Nevada Dispute Resolution Coalition (NDRC)

is assisting ACR in organizing a fundraising raffle. NDRC is requesting donations with a value of \$50.00 or more. Since most attendees will be from out of State, donations should be items that can be easily packed and transported. Gift cards for local restaurants and activities are also welcome as well as local art and jewelry. Wine tastings in Northern California would also be very popular items.

All donations should be newly purchased. NDRC will share in a portion of the raffle proceeds.

**Please contact
Monica Kales at**

mkales@mediatenmc.org

ACR October 2015 Conference in RENO



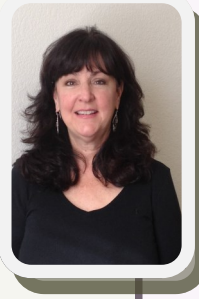
With over 75 exciting sessions, 120 expert speakers, numerous special events and hundreds of colleagues, this is ACR's "Must Attend" event this Fall!

To Register:

<http://reno.acrnet.org/>

**Keynote Speaker
Ambassador**

***Pierre-Richard Prosper*
Former US Ambassador-at-Large
in charge of the
Secretary of State's
Office of War Crimes**



From the Program Director's Corner.....

Working with non-English speaking parties and interpreters in mediation

Conducting mediations that require an interpreter can be challenging for everyone in the room and non-native speakers can be at a distinct disadvantage to native speakers. Mediators need to be sensitive to these situations and do our best to maintain a neutral, power-balanced atmosphere in the mediation. These mediations often take more time than mediations where everyone speaks the same language.

Access to a professional interpreter is preferred. However, there will be times when a professional is not available and a party may bring a family member or friend to help them. In that case, it's important to explain to the helper that all communications must be translated word for word. A family member or friend will naturally have a built-in bias towards their party. Emphasize that accurate communication is very important to the process and requires that translations be shared verbatim and should not include the interpreter's thoughts or feelings about the situation.

Sometimes, the court will provide a bi-lingual employee who is not a professional interpreter to translate. You should confirm that the person understands that the proceedings need to be translated verbatim to the extent possible. When a professional interpreter is provided, this type of explanation should not be necessary. Of course, all of these helpers need to sign the confidentiality agreement.

Another important aspect of working with non-native speakers is our choice of words. Many phrases, idioms or colloquial language just simply will not translate. Native English speakers understand when someone has "an axe to grind" or what it means "if the shoe fits" or when "it's raining cats and dogs." However, these phrases or metaphors, when translated verbatim, have no meaning to a non-native speaker and can cause confusion. Different cultures have different responses to acknowledging their understanding of what's being said. Some people will smile or nod which could be misinterpreted as understanding or agreement when that's really not the case. Other people may become irritated, emotional or uncooperative. During all stages of the mediation, use plain, literal language that is easily translatable and can be understood by all present while taking care to not talk down to anyone. Speak directly to the party and allow the interpreter to do his/her job. Refrain from directing the interpreter to "Tell him that ..."

The mandatory mediation program is providing us more opportunities to work with non-native speakers. I have gained a great respect and admiration for interpreters who have to translate not just words but the feelings behind the words while remaining calm and impartial. From my perspective, it's very hard work.

Neighborhood Mediation Center Annual Report July 1, 2014-June 30, 2015

Mediation Case Statistics: Fiscal year–end 6/30/15 NMC handled a total of 367 cases for the year. Disposition: 171 cases did not mediate; 192 cases mediated, 2 cases pending, 2 cases conciliated. Mediated cases: 62 cases did not come to agreement, 130 cases came to agreement (68% resolved). Service is provided to Reno and Sparks Justice Courts as well as to community members without court connected cases.

Volunteers: Mediators donated 388 hours of their time in mediation and an additional 48 hours assisting staff for a total of 436 hours. **THANK YOU!**

Training and Mentoring

NMC provided 48.5 hours of training to 48 participants.

NMC provided 102 hours of mentoring for 10 mediators

Technology: As a recipient of the 2015 IT Makeover Award from Microsoft and IQ Technology Solutions (\$3,500.00), NMC has upgraded outdated computer hardware and software to meet demands in increases in case load and case management. Technology upgrades will enhance internal and external communication and safeguard sensitive information.

Community

- ◆ Claudia Wahl and Monica Kales met with RJC judges and staff in January and February to coordinate the procedures for the mandatory small claims mediation program.
- ◆ On March 3, 2014 RJC launched the small claims mandatory mediation program; a collaboration between RJC and NMC.
- ◆ Claudia Wahl and Monica Kales met with judges and attorneys from the Republic of Georgia to present a synopsis of community mediation in the Reno and Sparks Justice Courts. The participants were interested in small claims mediation, mandatory mediation, and restorative justice involving juveniles.
- ◆ Claudia Wahl attended the NNRA Breakfast to promote NMC to members attending a conflict resolution presentation.
- ◆ Claudia Wahl attended the County Commissioner's meeting in Sparks to receive a Conflict Resolution Day proclamation read and signed by Mayor Martini.
- ◆ Claudia Wahl attended Nonprofit Tech Day at Microsoft Corporation.
- ◆ Claudia Wahl spoke with 8 members of Western Nevada Management, Inc. regarding the benefits of mediation.
- ◆ Claudia Wahl met with an HOA Community Manager to discuss the benefits of mediation and future training for managers.
- ◆ NMC delivered 25 brochures to the Sedona Village Community Association.
- ◆ Cases from the community are increasing with the majority of clients referred by the NMC website.
- ◆ Claudia Wahl presented 4 hours of conflict resolution training to UNR Gear-up Scholars and Upward Bound volunteers.

Organizational Participation

Ongoing collaboration with the Nevada Dispute Resolution Coalition (NDRC), Member.

Association for Conflict Resolution, Member.

Ongoing collaboration with UNR for mediation classes

Collaboration between Reno and Sparks Justice Courts and NMC.

Collaboration between NMC and Northern Nevada International Center

Marketing

Continuing updates to www.mediatenmc.org website

Continuing ad in YP

Consistent distribution of NMC quarterly newsletter to 376 contacts

NMC website

Staff, Board members, and mediators continue to speak to groups regarding mediation, facilitation, and training

Brochures are distributed to all Washoe County Libraries and County Agencies

Mediation information sheets (both English & Spanish) are handed out to all participants in the Reno and Sparks Justice

Financial: NMC financial information is available at 200 Ridge Street, Reno, NV 89501



**The next
Beginning
Mediation
Training
April 19-
April 23,
2016
UNR
Redfield
Campus

Register
through
UNR**