



Westshore Dispute Resolution Center
Serving Muskegon, Manistee, Mason and Oceana Counties

The Westshore Mediator

Volume 8 No. 2

New Beginnings

Editor/Publisher: Colleen Spyke

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From the Director's Desk...

It is hard to believe that six months have passed since I joined Westshore. It has been such a pleasure getting to know our diverse and committed pool of volunteers and learning more about the work that is happening in mediation and restorative justice locally and nationally.

The beginning of this month I attended the annual meeting of the 20 Community Dispute Resolution Center Directors in Lansing. It was wonderful to meet my counterparts at the other centers and to compare notes on the types of work we do and the ways in which we do it. I left the meeting feeling both energized and proud. I was energized thinking about new programs and ways to improve the programs we are already doing and proud of the work our staff and volunteers do in this community. I was proud too when I reflected on how broadly Westshore and our community, compared to many others, have committed to the concept and practice of Restorative Justice.

We are excited to be beginning a new application of mediation and restorative practice, working with Michigan Prisoner Re-entry Initiative (MPRI). The mission of MPRI is to reduce crime by implementing a seamless plan of services and supervision developed with each offender, delivered through state and local collaboration, from the time of their entry into prison through their transition, reintegration and aftercare in the community. Initially, a small group of mediators has agreed to take the mediation process into the prison and work with offenders and their community based families to address the conflict they may face upon the return home of the offender. The offender may be returning to live with their family after a long absence and those families, while excited to be reunited, will face some significant reintegration challenges; new house rules of conduct may be required. Our goal in the mediation process is to address these issues before they become conflicts. Restoratively speaking, the offender may also need to be accountable to his family for the harm his past actions have caused them before they can begin rebuilding their lives together. We see this process supporting the offender's reintegration, keeping their housing situation stable and making life better for their families and their children. We are excited to begin.

Kate

VOLUNTEERS:

We held our first of four mediator in-service trainings on March 26th. We had a large turnout, 37 mediators and staff, to hear **Robert Wright, JD** from Grand Rapids present **“Togetherness: Effective Use of Joint Sessions”** Mr. Wright’s topic was timely and generated lots of comments and group discussion.



Jeanne Yetman, Tim Boeve, Robert Wright, presenter, Larry DeVoogd, Gwen Ayotte, Paul Wagenmaker, Romella Ealom, Mary Payne, pictured at right



Anne Bachle Fifer presented, **“Apologies in Mediation”**.

In recent years, WDRC has been working with the **Oceana County Friend of the Court** and now with the **Muskegon Friend of the Court** to provide **Access & Visitation Mediations**. During these mediations, parents work to resolve the complex problems families face with custody, parenting time and sometimes, support issues.



Doug Van Epps, Director, Office of Dispute Resolution,

Our second mediator in-service training was held at the beautiful Muskegon Yacht Club on May 15th. **Anne Bachle Fifer** presented, **“Apologies in Mediation”** to 45 mediators and staff. Anne is a wonderful trainer and her personal experience as a mediator brings a delightful practicality to the information she presents. After the morning training, mediators were joined by the **WDRC Board of Directors** for the annual Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon. **Doug Van Epps**, Director, Office of Dispute Resolution, State Court Administrative Office (SCAO) joined us as well. Doug talked about the trends in Alternative Dispute Resolution state-wide. He also noted the rapid growth of the Muskegon Center and the increasingly complex cases that make up the center’s workload.

SCAO mandates that mediators who lead these A/V mediations, in addition to the general mediation training & internship, must have 20 hours of mediation experience and 16 hours of additional training. On May 7th and 8th, six WDRC mediators, **Gwen Ayotte, Sue Ann DeBrot, Joy Hamilton, Phil Leech, Georgia Strube** and **Kathy Winston**, attended the Access and Visitation training in Lansing.

Our pool of 21 A/V mediators are looking forward to meeting with Muskegon County Friend of the Court, Eric Stevens, on July 9th to further sharpen their skills.

Three other WDRC Mediators; David Dawes, Jean Morris and Mary Payne, attended SCAO’s 16 hour Adult Guardianship Mediation training in Lansing, June 17th and 18th. Guardianship Mediation, like Access & Visitation, requires experienced mediators to receive additional training before they begin working with families and others to resolve these issues. WDRC currently has 16 mediators certified to work on these types of mediations.

Carolyn Marcus JD, Case Manager and **Dr. Beverly DeMarr**, Board Member, recently completed the SCAO approved Domestic Mediation Training. Once Bev and Carolyn complete their internships, WDRC will have 7 mediators available to work with divorcing couples.

Six Westshore mediators: Tom Johnson, Bob Chessman, Shon Cook, Dave Kortering, Dave Wells and Carolyn Marcus, attended the ICLE 7th Annual Advanced Negotiation & Dispute Resolution Institute on March 13th at St. John’s, Plymouth, MI. The event, co-sponsored by the ADR section of the State Bar of Michigan and SCAO, Office of Dispute Resolution offered four training tracks: Domestic Relations, Negotiation, Arbitration and Mediation.



News from the Brian P. Mattson Restorative Justice Center

Curfew Violation Panel

Did you know that, depending on where they live, Muskegon County has a curfew set in place for youth? In the summer months, you will see more youth out past curfew, and with that there is the potential for them to, not only be involved in late-night criminal behavior, but also to be victims of crime themselves. Our new **Curfew Impact Panel** gives youth and their parents an opportunity to become aware of reasons for curfews as well as safety risks that happen “after hours”. If you are a member of a neighborhood association, law enforcement, or a concerned citizen who would like to encourage youth to stay safe and make more positive decisions for themselves and our community, you may be interested in speaking at this panel. Please call Jackie, 231-727-3318 ext 103, if you would like more information or would consider assisting with this new program.

Congratulations Sharlisa

Sharlisa Nearing, our **AmeriCorps** worker, graduated from **Baker College** with the Bachelors of Human Services degree. Sharlisa joined our team in October, 2007. Sharlisa and her husband Shannon are the proud parents of five: Joya, Michael, Jarrelle, Larren, Jaelin. Not content to rest on her laurels, Sharlisa is enrolled at Liberty University and will be pursuing a Masters in Christian Leadership this fall. Her plan is to open a homeless shelter by next year.



Monthly Support Group for Crime Victims and Survivors held the 3rd Tuesday of each month, at 6pm!

Mediator “Apology” Training



Al Morefield, Andrew Jones, Dollie Hippchen, Sharlisa Nearing, Nancy Frye



David Dawes, Richard Balkema, Robert Chessman, Romella Ealom, SueAnn Johnson, Mary Payne



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OCTOBER 22-23, 2008

**4th Annual Balanced and Restorative Justice
BARJ Conference!**

This year we are excited to announce keynote speaker, Jackie Millar, who shares her compelling personal story of the power of restorative justice, tracing her journey from crime victim to survivor.

This event will be held at the Holiday Inn Muskegon Harbor Hotel.

Speaker and workshop information coming soon!!

Questions? Contact Jackie

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Community Partner

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