



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

The Westshore Mediator

Volume 8 No. 1

New Beginnings

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INSIDE:

Director's Desk	1
Carolyn's Notes	2
Dave's Retirement Open House	3/4
BARJ's News	5
Donor's Acknowledgement	6

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From the Director's Desk...

Spring is in the air and the season of new beginnings is upon us. Writing this, my first newsletter, I am aware of the cycle of life and change. We learned on February 4th of the death of **Dr. James Bonner**, the Executive Director at Westshore from 1993 – 1996. Dr. Bonner first tilled the field in which we grow today and we are grateful for his many contributions.

Dave Cotter has retired and is beginning the next great adventure of his life. Dave, our wonderful volunteer mediators and Board members grew the organization from fledgling beginnings to the sturdy and vigorous organization we are today. We hosted a lovely party to honor Dave and his contributions to our community. For those of you who were unable to attend, we have included pictures inside, including the picture of Bob Carter trying to kiss Dave goodbye! It is a melancholy pleasure each day to see the plaque designating the "David Cotter Conference Room" and know how much we miss Dave's humor and his depth of program knowledge.

I have said many times in the last two months, how very large the shoes are that I must fill. Dave has verified that they are indeed size twelve and I am daunted. Daunted but very excited and tremendously honored to have been chosen by the staff and the Board to fill this role. I am awed by the commitment and skill of our volunteer mediators. I know they, we, are helping people change the way they approach conflict. I believe that the concept of restorative justice can be a powerful source of healing, and therefore the work I do here each day, the work WE do each day, matters.

We have been busy with lots of work this snowy winter. Our mediators have been amazing, driving through snow, sleet and howling wind to donate their time and expertise. We could not exist without the generosity of our volunteers and donors. We are grateful to learn eight people have chosen to designate their United Way donations to Westshore in addition to the program sustaining United Way grants we receive each year.

I look forward to sharing this journey with you.

Kate

Carolyn's Notes

We are pleased to announce that we have added a second county to the **Access and Visitation Domestic Mediation Pilot Project**. We have worked with **Oceana County** since 2005 and are pleased to add **Muskegon County** as of October 1, 2007.

Access and Visitation refers to a pilot program which provides mediation services to couples with issues of parenting time and/or custody at no charge to parties when referred through this program. We have enjoyed working collaboratively with **Patrick Murphy & Dena West**, Friend of the Court, to support and serve families in Oceana County. **Eric Stevens**, Friend of the Court in Muskegon County is also proving to be an enthusiastic partner in this process.

Access and Visitation mediation can be successful in helping parents learn how to communicate with each other in order to put the best interests of their children ahead of their feelings about their ex-spouse/significant other. We are aware that many of the children who come to us in the Balanced and Restorative Justice Mediations, having had conflict at school or interactions with law enforcement, also have family issues pending in Family Court. The Access & Visitation Mediation process is another tool we can offer to these families facing difficult issues.

Currently, we have twelve mediators trained in the SCAO approved Access & Visitation mediation process. There will be an Access & Visitation Domestic Relations training in Lansing, May 7 & 8, 2008. We have 6 mediators already signed up for the training and several more on a waiting list.

Training:

We are excited to announce that **Bob Wright, JD** will provide training to WDRC mediators on March 26th. Mr. Wright's theme will be, "Togetherness: Effective Use of Joint Session." The session will highlight how to maintain and return to the joint session and when and how to use the caucus most effectively. This is one of four continuing education, in-service sessions available to active mediators in 2008.

Basic Mediator Training:

If you or someone you know might be interested in becoming a volunteer mediator, we are planning our annual 40 hour training for September 17 – 27, 2008.

The training will be spread over eight days and take place at WDRC. Contact Carolyn Marcus if you are interested at 231-727-6001 ext. 102.

Advanced Training:

A reminder that the State Court Administrative Office (SCAO) through the Community Dispute Resolution Program (CDRP) is offering the only Adult Guardianship Mediation Training this year on June 17 & 18th at the Hall of Justice in Lansing. To be eligible for this training, mediators must have completed the basic 40 hour training, 10 hours of observation and have at least 20 hours of mediation experience. Contact Carolyn Marcus for more information.

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 • We misspelled our volunteer mediator, William Garrigan's name in our last newsletter. We regret the error.

Westshore Dispute Resolution Center Salutes Retiring Executive Director David Cotter



Hon. Neil Mullally, long time and tireless supporter of WDRC and Restorative Justice, presents Dave with a Certificate of Appreciation for his work in Alternative Dispute Resolution.



Board Members Bob Carter, Dee Carlson and Kathy Fortino enjoying the Community Open House.

Westshore Dispute Resolution Center (WDRC) held a Community Open House on February 8 and ended the evening with a Retirement Party for Dave Cotter. Approximately 100 people came to the Center’s new offices to wish Dave well and honor his service to Westshore and the Community.



The very talented Doug Van Epps presents Dave with a handmade wine glass. Included in this picture is Dave’s biggest fan, his grandson Josh.

Doug Van Epps, Director, Office of Dispute Resolution, State Court Administrative Office spoke first, acknowledging Dave’s work and presenting Dave with a beautiful wine glass he had made, featuring the Statue of Liberty as its base. Judge Neil Mullally spoke next and presented Dave with a Certificate of Appreciation for his years of service and his commitment to the concept of alternative dispute resolution. Judge Mullally has been a long time supporter of ADR, Restorative Justice and WDRC.

Finally, Bob Carter, former sheriff and WDRC Board member, told the gathering of the work Dave had done in Restorative Justice and Mediation during his tenure. To honor Dave’s contribution to WDRC, our largest mediation room was named the “David Cotter Conference Room.” Bob unveiled the plaque to much applause. Dave’s family, including one of his grandchildren, was on hand for the celebration.



Bob Carter, on behalf of the Board of Directors, thanks Dave for his work and dedicates the David Cotter Conference Room.



Bob Carter offers Dave Cotter a kiss good bye. Parting is such sweet sorrow!



Part of the very handsome Cotter Clan who arrived from as far away as California to surprise Dave and share in the festivities.

Dave Cotter retires February 8, 2008



Janet Day, volunteer mediator, and Kate Kesteloot Scarbrough, new Executive Director, look on as Dave says good bye to all those who have meant so much.



Hon. Neil Mullally, a long time and tireless supporter of WDRC and Restorative Justice.



Doug Van Epps, Director of the Office of Dispute Resolution, congratulates Dave on his retirement.



Pictured Kate Kesteloot Scarbrough, Executive Director with new kid's table and toys.

The Youth Advisory Council of the Community Foundation for Muskegon County provided \$285 for toys, games and supplies to keep children occupied during mediation. In addition, Big Lots of Muskegon donated the table storage unit to contain the items. Thank you to our donors. We couldn't do it without you!



HELP SUPPORT WESTSHORE DISPUTE RESOLUTION CENTER

Yes! I would like to support the work of Westshore Dispute Resolution Center does in Muskegon, Oceana, Mason and Manistee Counties with my tax deductible donation of:

\$25 \$50 \$100 Other _____

Please call or email me about volunteer opportunities _____



News from the Brian P. Mattson Restorative Justice Center

The Restorative Justice Center has been offering monthly, **Community Service** projects to Muskegon area youth. As a part of February's Community Service Projects we, together with Sacred Suds, worked on the rehabilitation of a house in the McLaughlin neighborhood. It was a really good experience. The kids learned basic skills, such as sanding and puttying, as well as developing positive friendships. Most of all, they have learned the importance of giving back to their community. Contact Sharlisa Nearing if you are interested in providing a site or have youth interested in Community Service. 231-727-3318 ext 109.



The **Crime Survivor Group** meets the third Tuesday of each month at 6:00 pm. This group provides a supportive environment for those who have been a victim of any type of crime to engage in discussion, network and learn about community resources. Contact Jackie Hallberg 231-727-3318 ext 103, for more information.

Twenty mediators successfully completed the **BARJ/Victim Offender Mediation Training** held at WDRC in February 2008. It was an enthusiastic group and we look forward to offering even more high quality, consistent Victim Offender Mediations. We are working actively to broaden our referral base, with the goal of allowing more serious criminal cases to use the BARJ process.



A definition of restorative justice might be, “**a philosophical framework for responding to crime and the actions needed to mend this harm. It focuses on crime as an act against another individual or community rather than the state. It is a future focused model that emphasizes problematic problem solving instead of ‘just desserts.’**” Mark Carey, Director of Community Corrections in Dakota County.

At **Westshore Dispute Resolution/Brian P. Mattson Restorative Justice Center** we do this work in a variety of ways. A significant part of our work happens in our impact panels. For nearly three years, the Restorative Justice Center has utilized the concept of impact panels to reach the youth who have committed an offense that cannot be addressed through mediation. In offenses like these, the victims are often the community as a whole and the family. Due to the frequency of such offenses and the inability to involve all possible victims, it is beneficial to address these types of offenses in a group setting in which the youth hear personal experiences from a panel of speakers. The Substance Abuse Panel is designed specifically for youth who have committed an offense involving alcohol or drugs. We are fortunate to have many dedicated speakers who volunteer their time to speak each month and bear witness to the harsh reality of the ways in which drug and alcohol use affects not only the individual but also the community and the family. **Rachael** relates her experience of substance use and recovery. **Katie** shares how her life has changed after being hit by a drunk driver and **Pam** talks about the loss of her son to a drug overdose. Recognizing the need for more specific support services, Pam and her husband are also starting a support group for parents who have lost children. These speakers are committed to making a difference in any way possible and volunteer their time in various capacities throughout the community. We truly appreciate their dedication. Contact Anje Banks if you would like to be a presenter or make a referral to any of our Impact Panels at 231-727-3318 ext 104.



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