



DRC Update

DISPUTE RESOLUTION CENTER

FALL 2003

DISPUTE RESOLUTION
CENTER

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The Dispute Resolution Center promotes the constructive resolution of conflict through open communication and shared decision making.

Valuing Volunteers

Giving mediators voice - telling mediators' stories

By Jeanne Zimmer

In the past three years working with the Dispute Resolution Center, I have been consistently amazed by the dedication, skills, and depth of experience of the volunteers at DRC. First, they must commit 30 hours to a basic skills training, and complete a minimum of six continuing-education credits each year. Then, they must block out a minimum of two hours for each mediation session or court calendar. Some cases – particularly those using restorative processes – may last months. Other cases may return annually to update agreements. DRC volunteers must be aware of their own conflict styles, be comfortable with high emotion, and be skilled in self-care.

DRC volunteers are more committed than any I've ever seen – and I've had over twenty years' experience in the not-for-profit sector. Additionally, their activities are un-sung – there are no movies made about the dashing restorative justice facilitator or statues erected in honor of a mediator who listened particularly well. And, because DRC's efforts are focused on the individuals and communities involved in conflict, they rarely get to tell their own stories.

On December 5th, we will have the opportunity to acknowledge the more than 150 truly wonderful people who sustain DRC. Together, they contribute over 3,000 hours each year as mediators, facilitators, trainers, case developers, interns, and board members — the 5th is our chance to say "thank you."

This past summer, 11 DRC volunteers had the opportunity to talk about themselves, conflict resolution, and what volunteering means to them. Greg Barnett, Assata Brown, Heron Diana, Aimee Gourlay, Jean Greenwood, Karen Hollaus, Nancy Leland, Eleanor Ling, Jean Peterson, Ahmed Sirleaf, and Milt Thomas were interviewed by students in Metropolitan State University's Conflict Mediation Class (taught by Milt Thomas). The next four issues of the DRC Update will feature excerpts from the volunteer profiles written by students Melanie Needham, Eileen Pankey, Gary Wallenhorst, David Wilson, and Debbie Wroge. Here's a sample, written by Debbie Wroge about DRC volunteer Milt Thomas:

Milt Thomas' reasons for being a volunteer mediator are twofold: his commitment to the community and a sense of purpose. Milt has been a volunteer with DRC for more than eight years and looks at volunteering in a selfish way. "It's the first time I really feel like I'm fulfilling my civic responsibility, and I have a sense of purpose. So there are some sort of selfish things there." With his interest in conflict and background in communications, the field of mediation provides an opportunity for Milt to use his expertise in a meaningful way. "Mediation allows me to really feel like I'm practicing what I'm preaching with mediation. It captivates me."

A welcoming spirit, support and camaraderie draw Milt to DRC. "I've always tended to like folks that I've known who are volunteers. There are a few things about the DRC in particular that really appeal to me. They tend to be more inclusive. If you've been trained somewhere else, we might need to orient you a little bit, but you're welcome to work with us or volunteer with us." A cheerleader for the process, Milt's philosophy on mediation is aligned with DRC's. "We're not as focused on the resolution or settlement -- we believe in the process. I think even amongst the community programs, it is especially philosophically aligned."

Milt's commitment and devotion to the mediation process is nothing short of inspirational. A sense of gratitude washes over me for having the opportunity to hear about his experiences and the spirit of mediation -- and at the same time, discovering a little bit more about myself.

Message From the Board Chair

Hello:

Fall has arrived, with its cool temperatures and beautiful colors wherever we look. It is a time for finishing what we have started throughout the year and planning for next year. DRC is doing the same. 2003 to date has been stressful at best. Financing and the economy have taken its toll on the Center and staff. Yet because of all the volunteers, dedicated staff and board members, DRC is strong — albeit lean. Throughout the process the important things have remained: dedicated staff and volunteers working in the communities to teach and train non-violent conflict resolution skills, and providing mediation and restorative justice services to assist in the peaceful resolution of conflicts.

The world and all of its conflicts are ever changing. The Dispute Resolution Center continues to meet its mission, "...promoting the constructive resolution of conflict through open communication and shared decision making." With lean times for non-profit agencies we again ask for your contributions. We ask that you consider DRC in your holiday giving and assist us in continuing to bring peaceful alternatives to conflict in the communities we serve.

DRC will be having a volunteer appreciation event on December 5, 2003. We look forward to celebrating all of the wonderful volunteering that makes DRC such a meaningful and important part of our community. Volunteering in your community is a worthwhile, satisfying duty, which gives back to the community. You can volunteer by learning to mediate, or to serve as a board member or committee member.

By becoming involved, you take hold of the future and help mold it — improving the quality of life in the community and in yourself. By helping to create a non-violent, peaceful community, you will have truly made a difference. Our current staff and volunteers at DRC have done just that: they have made a difference in our community creating a more peaceful, educated community in which conflict resolution is non-violent. Are you up to the challenge?

Have a blessed and safe holiday season.

Colleen Luna

The DRC Board of Directors is looking for members for the following committees:

Financial Advisory Committee Kim Vappie, Chair

Responsible for setting financial policy for the organization. Reviews financial statements, audits, and budgets, and presents to the full board for approval. Meets monthly.

Volunteer Services Committee Julia Frost Nerbonne, Chair

Builds connections among volunteers and community to create the social capital necessary for DRC to fulfill its mission. Coordinates in-service training opportunities and sponsors occasional speakers and social activities. Meets quarterly.

Development Lynne Markus, Chair

Helps ensure the fiscal health of the agency by developing, actualizing, and monitoring the agency's fundraising strategy. Meets bi-monthly.

Program Advisory Committee Open

Responsible for program planning and evaluation. Establishes and monitors program goals. Meets bi-monthly.

Outreach/Public Relations Open

Coordinates agency external relations; trainings agency ambassadors, assists with newsletter content and production.

Human Resources Committee Rita Johnson, Chair

Reviews personnel policies, benefits structure, and ensures staffing patterns are adequate to fulfill program goals. Meets quarterly.

Strategic Alliance Committee Rene Diebold, Chair

This ad hoc committee was established in 2003 to explore potential partnerships, affiliations, and mergers for the future of DRC. Meets on an as-needed bases.

Board Development Ross Azevedo, Chair

Responsible for the recruitment, mentoring, and recognition of board members. Analyzes board composition; coordinates the orientation of new board members. Meets as needed.

Committees expand the scope of influence of the agency, and they enhance DRC's work – please consider how you might serve!

Blueberry Muffins and Lobbying

By Heron Diana

Most of us learned how to lobby at a young age. We would plead with this adult or that adult for something: staying up late, getting a bike, going to hang out with a friend. We never called it lobbying, but that's what it was. And we actually do it many times a week.

Want a piece of lobbying trivia? About ten years ago, third graders lobbied for a Minnesota state muffin. Guess what? Our state muffin is now the blueberry muffin.

I marvel at the amount of time and money that must have been spent lobbying for that mini mountain of a cake with steaming dark blue blobs of *Vaccinium*.

I can, if need be, really push an idea that I think would help a friend or help at work. What if I took that energy, pulled together people with like-minded beliefs, and went to our legislators and really talked their ear off about that idea? Think of the influence we would have!

Why, some of you are asking, would I want to influence my legislator? Our legislators are the representatives of our thoughts, beliefs and ideals. Legislators make, change, or repeal our laws. If we have an important idea, we convince our legislators to sponsor it. Hopefully, they will convince other lawmakers to co-sponsor our idea, which will have turned into a bill, into law.

Wouldn't it be great to have more laws on the books ensuring the funding of conflict resolution and restorative justice?

I learned something a couple of weeks ago while I was at the Legislature learning how to be a good lobbyist. I learned that lobbying is really easy to do. I also learned that even when the legislature or the governor says there is no more money, if people lobby hard enough, more money can be found. (This is the power of positive outlook.)

Take a lobbyist to coffee next week. Buy a blueberry muffin, and ask when a picture of it is going to appear on our state road map, will you?

Congratulations to DRC Board Member Lynne Markus and Ramsey County Commissioner Victoria Reinhardt who were recent recipients of the Intergovernmental Pollution Prevention Advisory Team's awards for Outstanding Leadership and Commitment to Pollution Prevention, Waste Reduction and Recycling!

It isn't enough to talk about peace.

One must believe in it.

And it isn't enough to believe in it.

One must work at it.

Eleanor Roosevelt

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Comments are encouraged!*



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Dispute Resolution Center
974 W. Seventh Street
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Dispute Resolution Center

Volunteer Recognition and 21st Anniversary Celebration

Friday, December 5, 2003

Hamline University Conference Center

6:00 P.M. Reception

Entertainment by The Messiah Men

7:00 P.M. Dinner

Volunteer Appreciation and Awards Program Silent Auction

For more information please email drc-administration@comcast.net or call 651 .292 .6067.