PROGRAM NOTES

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Community Dispute Resolution Centers

PROGRAM NOTES

These notes were contributed by staff of the individual Community Dispute Resolution Centers to summarize the activities of their programs during Fiscal Year 2002-2003. If you would like more information about any of the Centers, contact information is listed on the final page of these notes.

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Albany & Rensselaer Counties

In late 2001, Mediation Matters was approached by the Albany County Probation Department to consider starting a PINS Mediation program. The impetus for the contact was the pending increase in the PINS-eligible age from 16 to 18 years. As of July 1st, 16 and 17-year old could be the subject of a PINS petition brought by parent, guardian, law enforcement personnel, or school administrator. In May of 2002, we sent eight mediators to a two-day parent-teen mediation training with Duke Fisher, and in July of 2002, we began to accept referrals from Probation.

At first, we had a difficult time getting everyone to the table. As staff became more familiar with the process, and as communication with the Probation Department improved, scheduling became easier. After nearly nine months, everyone has been quite satisfied with the Program. We have been referred over 40 cases, 24 of which have resulted in a mediation. Of these 24, we are quite pleased that 18 have resulted in an agreement.

To our surprise, most cases have been resolved in only one session. This has been especially pleasing to the parties. Perhaps more important, those cases that have resulted in a mediated agreement have not returned to the County. In other words, the agreements are working and none of the parents have seen the need to refile a PINS Petition.

In addition, in January Mediation Matters was approved to receive funding from the Albany County Youth Bureau to cover the program during 2003.

Since November of 2002, Mediation Matters has been working with OCA and the Albany Family Court to develop a Child Permanency Mediation Program.

The Albany County Family Court Child Permanency Mediation Program, coordinated by Mediation Matters, will promote collaborative planning in selected matters before the Court, through mediation between the Albany County Department of Children, Youth and Families (ACDCYF), foster care and human service agencies, biological and adoptive parents, their advocates and families, the law guardian for the child, other stakeholders, as well as the child, when appropriate.

These program protocols are currently being developed collaboratively by a group representing Mediation Matters, the New York State Unified Court System, Office of Alternative Dispute Resolution Programs; Albany County Family Court (ACFC); as well as many of the stakeholders named above.

The purpose of the Permanency Mediation Program is to provide a problem-solving forum for families, Albany County Family Court and Albany County Department of Children, Youth and Families and other service providers. The goals for participants in the mediation process are to:

- develop a plan for ensuring safety for the child;
- explore, and plan for, options to meet the child's physical and emotional needs;
- focus on family preservation and strengthening families, and on support options to provide for the child's best interest.

Research into permanency mediation has found that mediation assists the courts, the department of social services and families in resolving conflict, creates a proactive stance when looking at child welfare and creates increased options in regards to permanency planning. Typically, participants in mediation (including the mediators, attorneys, parties, caseworkers and families) have found the experience to be positive and participants have found increased resources for planning for a child's safety and permanency. In areas where there is an effective

permanency mediation program, there are higher rates of parental compliance and shorter stays in foster care for the children.

Mediation Matters is sending four mediators to a five-day Permanency Mediation Training in New York City at the end of March.

Broome County

We would like to take this opportunity to welcome Richard Squire as the new Executive Director of ACCORD, A Center for Dispute Resolution in Broome and Tioga Counties. Richard comes to ACCORD from Literacy Volunteers of Broome and Tioga counties and he has many years of experience with family and child agencies.

Richard's vision for ACCORD is to promote financial stability by increasing the volume of fee-for- service cases. He wants to deliver professional and high quality services with a well-conceived principled approach to ADR.

He would like to see ACCORD become a household name within the community. Furthermore, Richard would like to see more collaboration between ACCORD and the courts, schools and other community agencies.

Bronx County

In Bronx County, the Institute for Mediation and Conflict Resolution, Inc. (IMCR) continues to provide alternative dispute resolution services in Bronx County. Specialized training sessions and collaborative efforts have allowed the Center to expand its services in Bronx Small Claims Court, Housing Projects, Bronx Family Court, and the Human Rights Commission Office in Bronx County.

Pursuant to a New York City Family Court contract and in collaboration with Fordham Family Court Mediation Project, IMCR began to address Child Custody and Visitation matters referred by Bronx Family Court Judges and Referees. A total of 24 committed volunteer mediators participated in a two-day CV training offered by Elayne Greenberg at Columbia University Teachers College.

The Center began collaborating with the Human Rights Commission Office in Bronx County. This has allowed mutual referrals and specialized training for IMCR's staff and volunteer mediators.

ADR Services

IMCR addresses Child Custody and Visitation matters; PINS Cases; Small Claims Court issues; Special Education and Early Intervention cases; Lemon Law arbitration; Landlord/Tenant cases; Housing Disputes; Personal Injury disputes; and many other types of amenable cases. The Center does not address Domestic Violence matters or issue Orders of Protection.

At present, mediation services are provided at our main office located at 384 E. 149th St, Suite #330; in Co-op City at 2049 Bartow Avenue, Room 28; Edenwald-Gunhill Neighborhood Center at 1150 E. 229th Street; and Neighborhood Youth & Family Services at 1831 Bathgate Avenue.

International Visitor

On February 19, 2003, *Dr. Esperanza Cuan Acosta*, Executive Director of the Nicaraguan ADR Office, visited IMCR Dispute Resolution Center to learn more about ADR in the state of New York, the role of Community Mediation Centers, and that of the CDRCP office.

The knowledge was necessary in order to launch a Community Mediation Project in Nicaragua. For the past three years, IMCR has provided technical support and training to the Nicaraguan pool of attorney mediators and trainers. As a result, IMCR's Executive Director received a Certificate of Recognition from *Dr. Alba Luz Ramos Vanegas*, President of the Nicaraguan Supreme Court of Justice, on March 6, 2003 for his support and valuable contribution towards a culture of peace in the country.

Certified Mediators

The following are IMCR's newly Certified Mediators: *Georgina Silby; Eric Seifert; Graham Daw;Anne Borel ; Tracey Pastan; Merle Rein; Shirley Disu; Valerie Cates; Patricia Haynes; Scott Bowman; Jesse Halfon; Joseph Krummel; Diana Masone; Maura McHugh; Susan Perlstein-Falkove; Beth Schwartz; Libby Vazquez; and Lauren Wenegrat.*

Upcoming Training

The following are IMCR's weekend Basic Community Mediation training dates for the year 2003: (1) April 25-27 and May 2 - 4; (2) August 1 - 3 and 8 - 10 (3) December 5 - 7 and 12 - 14.

For more information, contact Stephen E. Slate, Executive Director at (718) 585-1190; Fax (718) 585-1962; by e-mail: imcrmed@nyct.net.

Chemung & Delaware Counties

The Dispute Resolution Center of Chenango and Delaware Counties has offices in Delhi and Norwich, New York. Both Counties offer a Family Court Mediation Program and also offer assistance to petitioners at the Family Court site. Petitioners are welcomed to the Court, assisted in understanding the petition process and helped to identify family need and community resources that may help meet those needs. The Center works with the Delaware County PINS (Person in Need of Supervision) Committee and has developed a mediation referral process to address PINS issues and related family conflict. Community mediation is offered to address all other disputes which are not Family Court related.

The Center advocates for and trains Peer Mediators in school districts and sponsors an annual Peer Mediator Conference. The PeaceMaker Program is offered to students in grades four and five. The ten-hour curriculum addresses conflict and anger management, effective decision making and communication skills, dealing with "bullies" and respecting and celebrating "differences". The PeaceMaker Program is well received by students, staff and administration.

The Center offers conflict management workshops in the community, school, and work environments. An evaluation tool for assessing the conflict management climate in the workplace is used to build workshops to meet the needs of employers and employees. Organizations are assisted in understanding the impact on the "bottom line" when conflict goes unmanaged. The Dispute Resolution Center offers Basic Mediation and Custody/Visitation Mediation Training and recruits volunteers interested in offering mediation skills to resolve conflict. Please contact Donna Kankiewicz, Director; to learn more about services and volunteer opportunities at 607-336-1982 or dkdrc@ascent.net

Columbia & Greene Counties

Over the last year, Common Ground increased both its staff and program services. We are pleased to announce that, in November, we began providing administrative support to the

New York State Commission on Quality Care for the Mentally Disabled, Surrogate Decision-Making program. The intent of the program is to obtain informed consent for individuals with disabilities requiring medical procedures and lacking a legal guardian to assist or accept responsibility for that decision. Tina M. Flagler was hired in November as the full-time Program Manager. Surrogate Decision Making is similar in its mission with that of the CDRC's in that it relies on volunteer panelists to carry out hearings, and paid staff to manage caseload and other administrative tasks. The contract for the Taconic region includes Warren, Washington, Dutchess, Fulton, Montgomery, and, naturally, the Capital District. At the current rate, we expect to hear approximately 300 cases this year, utilizing 287 volunteers. We are also fortunate to have the benefit of an intern from Columbia Greene Community College to assist us with this program.

With the assistance of the ACT for Youth grant and the United Way, *Forever Parents*, a program for parenting-apart, continues to develop and expand services. Based on curricula developed by Hofstra University (P.E.A.C.E.) and University of Massachusetts, Department of Psychiatry ("Parents Apart"), the program teaches separating parents how to keep their children away from conflict, while developing effective co-parenting skills. Jennifer Stutstrim, Youth Coordinator, manages the program.

Nina Wallant was extremely helpful in "tweaking" the program, and, over the summer, put the revised, visually appealing curriculum on Power Point. We're fortunate that many volunteer their time and expertise. Greene County Family Court law guardian Dale Dorner faithfully volunteers by providing information about the Family Court, and basic budgeting and information about single family households is provided by Cornell Cooperative Extension. The local community college donates space and the projector for classes. Judge Pulver has become quite an advocate for this program, making regular referrals to contentious parents.

Jennifer has been quite busy with peer mediation and workshops for youth in both Columbia and Greene counties. Common Ground has a long-standing collaborative relationship with agencies serving youth, and continues to be actively involved on many committees and boards whose mission is to serve youth. Joyce Reeve, Community Mediation Coordinator is part of a regular team assessing intervention options with Columbia County Probation, Mental Health Services and Community Action. Parent-Child mediation is often part of the child's assessment plan.

Divorce Mediation has mushroomed, and George Carroll has a six week waiting period before we are able to schedule firs sessions. A training is planned for the spring.

The Work Experience Program ("WEP") with Social Services is quite busy, which has helped tremendously with fee for service mediations.

Family Court mediation is also very busy. At the request of the Family Court, George increased court time from half a day to a full day in Greene County. Wednesdays are still devoted to Columbia County.

Common Ground is on the web at www.commongroundinc.org, this event made possible through a grant from NAFCM.

This writer is honored to be a member of the NYSDRA Board, effective fall of 2002.

For more information about anything described in this report, call Dawn K. Wallant, Executive Director, at (518) 943 0523 or email at dwallant@commongroundinc.org.

Dutchess County

The Mediation Center of Dutchess County (MCDC) has experienced a number of changes since the last NYM newsletter went to press. New staff members include: Amber Turlik, Youth Program Manager, Barbara Moran, Family Program Manger and Carrie Andrade, Family Program Coordinator. Ingrid Dawes has moved on to new horizons and Helen Millar now manages the Lemon Law Program as well as the Community Program (which she previously managed).

During the fall of 2002 MCDC registered 12 very enthusiastic new mediator trainees for the Apprenticeship Program. Within the past month the new trainees have received Family Mediation Training, and Domestic Violence Awareness Training in addition to their on-going mediation observation training.

The Family Program continues to grow and develop. The Mediation Center is revising domestic violence policies and procedures in a collaborative effort with the YWCA Battered Women's Services, Dutchess County Family Court Grace Smith House, and the Universal Response Against Domestic Violence. The collaboration is a positive and powerful testament to the benefits of agencies looking beyond differences towards creating new services, which will benefit the communities they serve.

Alternative Responses to Conflict (*ARC*) is now being offered in its second year. *ARC* was developed within the Family Program as a four-hour course for parents who wish to improve their conflict interaction. Through experiential work and discussion, *ARC* classes offer participants the opportunity to learn new ways of interacting in conflict, while developing clarity and enhancing decision-making. *ARC* participants receive a certificate of completion at the conclusion of the course. Participants are commonly referred through Family Court, and can also come from other agencies and self-referrals. *ARC* has been well received by Family Court, which commonly refers participants.

The Youth Program has been providing conflict resolution education workshops, peer mediation training, and the facilitation of discussions and mediations. We are working to integrate Restorative Justice principles in schools, after-school programs and other organizations that work with youth. Recently, we conducted training on the principles of restorative justice for youth court volunteers. Youth court volunteers learned to incorporate restorative justice principles into the sanctions process. We are also working on the expansion of the youth victim/offender dialogue program through a pilot referral process with the Office of Probation and Community Corrections.

<u>Restorative Justice in Dutchess County</u>

The Mediation Center of Dutchess County has been working to promote the principles and practices of Restorative Justice in the county for over 3 years. In spring 2002, MCDC in conjunction with the Westchester CDRC, sponsored a Restorative Justice Symposium with presenters Dale Landry, Kathy Elton, Dennis Maloney, and Andrew Thomas. Over 100 people attended.

MCDC executive director Jody Miller and staff members have been active members of the Community Involvement Committee, a sub-committee of the Dutchess County Criminal Justice Council (CJC). The CJC was created in 1993 by the Dutchess County Legislature, and consists of law enforcement, judiciary, criminal justice service providers, and citizens. The CJC has become a model for collaborative problem solving, and on January 7, 2003, formally endorsed the principles of Restorative Justice with the following statement:

> "Within the range of legally authorized sentences, and when practicable, our criminal justice system recognizes the basic concept that offenders be held responsible for repairing the harm to victim and community through sanctions, programs and initiatives that incorporate a balanced Restorative Justice approach. Such approach includes promoting offender accountability, competency development, and community safety."

Referrals from the Dutchess County Probation Department to the Victim Offender Dialogue program are on the increase. Young offenders, who have admitted accountability for their crime, meet with their victims to answer questions, understand the very personal impact of their crime on the victim's life, and discuss victim-defined restitution.

Later this spring 2003, MCDC will pilot a victim-impact curriculum at the Dutchess County Jail for the prisoners housed on the Transitions Unit. The prisoners must qualify to be admitted to this 50-bed therapeutic Transitions Unit where they participate daily in the variety of educational, life skills, and therapeutic programs. The purpose of the victim-impact curriculum is to awaken the prisoners to the very personal impact of their crimes on victims through lectures, interactive exercises, and in-person victim statements. The overarching goal is to put a human face on crime and break through the criminal thinking that depersonalizes and, therefore, rationalizes criminal behavior.

Volunteer Program

The Volunteer Program includes 4 components: Orientation, Training, Apprenticeship, and Continuing Education. On January 1, 2003, the NYS Alternative Dispute Resolution office instituted a detailed apprenticeship program for newly trained community mediators. To meet these new requirements, MCDC has recreated its Volunteer Program and engaged the services of three of our experienced community mediators to serve as mentors for our apprentices. Each mentor has 4 apprentices. After observing their mentor mediate 1 or 2 cases, each apprentice then co-mediates with their mentor for the balance of their apprenticeship. The mentors also run regular support groups for their apprentices, which gives the apprentices an opportunity to share their experiences and ask their questions. This is a rigorous program for the Mentors, who have graciously made themselves available to take cases for the center - sometimes weekly - so that their apprentices will have regular opportunities to mediate and will be able to complete the requirements of the apprenticeship program

Erie County

After 4 consecutive years of expansion, the BBB Dispute Settlement Center is focusing on an internal quality service initiative. Director Julie Loesch, Esq. explains, "We must ensure that even with much of our energy going toward new mediation and arbitration programs, contracts and new offices, exceptional service to our important stakeholders including clients, volunteers, the courts and community remains our first priority. We have built our reputation on quality programs and that is not something we can afford to sacrifice for the sake of expansion." The Center is reviewing and revising, where appropriate, intake, screening and case management protocols for the community, family and commercial dispute resolution programs to meet the changing needs of the courts and clients we serve as well as new contractors and referral sources. "We are establishing a committee made up of volunteer mediators and representatives from our most important stakeholders to help us maintain the highest standards of mediation practice",

Volunteer Coordinator, Jill Achenbach. The committee will be charged with developing a new policy and procedures manual for volunteers detailing criteria for admission to the panel of mediators, dismissal from the panel as well as responsibilities of the Center to the mediators and the mediators to the Center. After completion of that project, it is anticipated that the committee will evolve into an Ethics and Standards Committee intended to be a peer review process to help staff in an ongoing evaluation of mediation practice at the Center. A mentoring/coaching component will assist staff in observing individual mediators on a regular basis and offering feedback toward the goal of skills development. An oversight component will allow the committee to make recommendations for ongoing training needs and decisions related to admission and dismissal from the panel. "With nearly 100 mediators and apprentices in the Buffalo office alone, staff can no longer meet this challenge without the assistance of our most important partners: our volunteers" explains Executive Assistant and Special Projects Coordinator, Ellen Tucker.

Another major part of the quality service initiative is our commitment to updating our domestic violence screening protocol. Center staff currently screens all cases to establish willingness of the parties to mediate as well as appropriateness of the matter for mediation. In any case wherein the relationship between the parties might harbor domestic violence, staff follows a special screening protocol aimed at identifying the existence and scope of any current or past emotional, verbal or psychological abuse. While the protocol is modified on a regular basis to take advantage of updated screening tools and techniques, we recognize that our expertise is in mediation process not domestic violence. Therefore, we have reached out to the expert community and are fortunate to have the assistance of Professor Sue Tomkins, UB Law School Domestic Violence Clinic on this project. Once completed, we will have a screening tool that the mediation and the domestic violence communities have agreed is appropriate. Program Directors in each satellite office will reach out to their domestic violence community for input on local referral sources.

Given the current fiscal climate, the Center is pleased to have the ongoing support of the 8th Judicial District for the Family Court Mediation Program. The Center is grateful to District Administrative Judge Sharon S. Townsend who has led the county-by-county expansion of the Family Mediation Program. In February 2003, the program was expanded to Genesee County, which became the most recent location in the 8th JD to offer mediation for custody/visitation disputes. The Center also offers family mediation in Erie and Niagara Counties and in-court settlement conference facilitation as well as mediation in Chautauqua County. While new program start up is often a slow process, such was not the case in Genesee County wherein Family Court Judge Eric Adams had referrals waiting on the program's first day of operation. Experienced family mediators from Erie and Niagara counties are assisting newer volunteers mediate parenting disputes referred by the court. The Center hopes to begin a program in the southern tier region of Allegany, Cattaraugus and Wyoming counties in the near future.

Herkimer County

In Herkimer County, alternative dispute resolution services are provided by the Dispute Resolution Center. The Community Mediation component, under the supervision of Michael Kapala, continues to expand in the number and types of cases handled. The Center recently received a Juvenile Justice Accountability Incentive Block grant through the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services to offer mediation to youth, who are between the ages of 7

and 15, and who are involved with the juvenile justice system for the first time. Our staff works closely with the Probation Department and the newly formed PINS Diversion Unit, to screen and accept cases in which mediation between the youth and the victim and or the family may prevent an out of home placement or further involvement with the juvenile justice system.

As the Region Five Center for the Agricultural Mediation contract, we have arranged numerous mediations for farm families in conflict with lenders or family members. In addition to a steady caseload of housing and interpersonal disputes, we continue to offer conciliation and mediation services between consumers and merchants, to make restitution for checks returned for insufficient funds. Arbitration services are provided to each of the five local Housing Authorities, in accordance with HUD regulations, as a protection for tenants who have had their Section 8 rental assistance terminated or their application denied.

Joanna Lanphier, Family Court Mediation Coordinator, has established an office in the Herkimer County Family Court and is the first point of entry for families filing petitions for custody, visitation or child support. Joanna meets with each petitioner and in conjunction with staff from the Domestic Violence Program, screens each situation for appropriateness for mediation. When the parties are amenable, Joanna holds mediations in both the Court facility and the Center.

Through a contract with the Herkimer County Department of Social Services, we provide Supervised Visitation Services to individuals for whom parenting time requires supervision, but a conflict persists between the custodial and non-custodial parent, as to who will provide the supervision. Ruth Hall, is the Case Manager for the Supervised Visitation Program, and recruits and trains a roster of Supervisors. Children involved with this program have ranged in age from two months to 15 years old. Occasionally, families will use our Center as a neutral site at which to deliver the child(ren) to the other parent.

During the 2002-03 school years, JoAnn Salamone, Youth Initiatives Coordinator, has made conflict resolution training and peer mediation services available to 2261 students and 968 adults, through the TREATY Program. Thirty-three school districts/ community organizations have received training in the new School Anti-violence Education (SAVE) Certification; Violence Prevention, *Essentials of Asset Building, Understanding Bullying Behavior*, and the *Peaceful Classroom***.** The third Annual Peer Mediator Conference Day was held at the Adirondack Center in St. Johnsville, at which high school Peer Mediators from Herkimer, Frankfort, Town of Webb, West Canada Valley and Brookfield met to refresh their skills and participate in team-building and challenge activities.

The Conference Day was made possible by two grants received by the New York Life Foundation Volunteer Action Program. The Foundation encourages their employees and agents to volunteer at local not-for-profit organizations, especially those involving youth initiatives, and supports these activities in the form of grant awards.

For further information about the Dispute Resolution Center of Herkimer County, please contact Annemarie Adams, Director, at (315) 894-9917; or write: Dispute Resolution Center of Herkimer County, 61 West Street, Ilion, NY, 13357.

Jefferson & Lewis Counties

The Jeff-Lewis Mediation Center is dedicated to effecting peaceful conflict resolution between disputing parties in Jefferson and Lewis counties. This year our Board of Directors established the following vision statement: “People in our communities will have access to

education and assistance with the peaceful and confidential resolution of conflict by working with specially trained volunteers and staff." Jefferson County covers 1,293 square miles with a population of 11,738, while even more rural Lewis County is also 1,293 square miles with an approximate population of 26,000. During the last calendar year, our mediators and staff handled over 600 cases from both counties, including 225 Family Court cases, a service expanding due to the presence of Ft. Drum and the need of their population for custody & visitation agreements. We are training our fifth group of Family Court mediators this year, anticipating a total of 17 mediators available for this unique and important service. Program growth in other mediations continues to be a focus for our agency, and we have participated in several resource fairs and as speakers with small organizations in our area. We plan to re-institute our check-recovery program and to continue the work in City Court referrals discussed at Alice Rudnick's visit last fall.

This agency also sponsors a Youth Court program and a CASA program. Youth Court heard 99 cases last year, indicating a steady increase of referrals from law enforcement officials since beginning with our agency in 1997. They have added a mentoring component whereby youth serving as defense attorneys mentor the offenders throughout the whole completion of sentences thereby assisting the offender in getting the most from positive peer influence during their exposure to the law enforcement system. Two youth court members were chosen to present a workshop on working with special needs youth at the NYS Youth Court Conference this spring. Our CASA program was recently honored by the National CASA Association by being chosen as 1 of 30 programs (in a field of over 900) to participate in a pilot training course for volunteer retention. As a result of this recent training, our agency will benefit as we establish a strategic planning process which will focus on public relations and diversity will addressing retaining volunteers we've invested time and money in training for our programs.

We are proud that our agency will celebrate 13 years of service in our community and recognize the more than 39 board and advisory members and 70 volunteers who serve as Mediator, CASA Volunteers and Members of the Court at our annual dinner in April.

For more information about our mediation, CASA and Youth Court programs, please contact Linya Bell, Executive Director at (315) 785-0333, or visit our website at www.jefflewismediation.org

Montgomery County

Montgomery County Department of Probation and Tri-County Mediation recently were presenters to The Third International Conference on Conferencing, Circles and Other Restorative Practices.

Over 300 People from all parts of the globe came together for this conference. People journeyed from as far away as Australia and New Zealand and hailed from places such as the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Belgium, Sweden, Italy, the Antilles, the Philippines, the Middle East, Hong Kong, the Yukon and other parts of Canada and many of the United States, including Hawaii and Alaska. There was a number of different Native American and First Nation peoples represented from the Nishnawbe-Aski, Ashinabe, Secwepemc, Qagan Tayagungin, Esketemc, Mille Lacs Ojibwe, Wet'suwet'en, Laksilyu, Navajo Mistawasis Cree, Mohawk and Tyendinaga, as well as other nations, clans and territories.

The presentation was titled Juvenile Accountability Conferencing, A Child of Restorative Justice.

In April of 2001, The Montgomery County Probation Department received a Juvenile Justice Grant from the NYS Division of Criminal Justice Services. This reflects Montgomery County Probations redesign of their entire approach to working with juveniles utilizing the philosophy of Restorative Justice and the Balanced Approach. Previously, a key component was missing in their program, accountability.

The grant target populations are juveniles, between the ages of 10 to 15 who have committed an act of delinquency. Although this program is primarily an intake program, a small number, if deemed appropriate, are referred post-adjudication. Cases deemed inappropriate are: sex offenders, serious assault, and evidence of serious mental health issues.

The grant goals are as follows.

1. To provide a key accountability component to the existing juvenile service.
2. Through the conferencing, the juveniles will be encouraged to take personal responsibility for their actions by meeting face to face with the victim.
3. Give the juvenile an opportunity to repair the harm they have done.
4. Increase and promote a sense of community, thus helping the juvenile to reintegrate into the community and also strengthen their community ties.
5. Reduce recidivism rate ***To date of the conferences that have been held, 90% of the juveniles have not re-offended although it is way too soon to know of the long term effect.
6. Make restitution and community service victim specific when possible.
7. Provide answers and closure for the victims. **To date, 57% of the victims have conferenced.

In order to implement this program, Montgomery County Probation Department partnered with The Tri-County Mediation Center. This working partnership has been beneficial to both with each supplying an essential element to the program.

When a referral is received from Probation, an introductory letter, including a pamphlet, is sent to both the offender and victim. This letter is followed up by a phone call one week later. The main purpose of the call is to get an appointment to explain in person the purpose of the program and the conference process. The victim is reassured that agreeing to a pre-conference in no way obligates them to actually conference. The meeting is scheduled for a time and place convenient for the victim.

At this pre-conference meeting, the benefits of the conference process are explained in detail. The victim is encouraged to tell their story. They are asked to explain the consequences to them because of the offense. If the victim is willing to participate, the whole process is then discussed. Victims are told in detail the questions that will be asked by the facilitator during the conference. This is to insure the victims will feel comfortable with the process. Any expectations and concerns the victim has are uncovered and explored. The victims are then asked to be thinking about what they would like to come out of the conference. The victim is asked to think about restitution. It is mentioned that restitution is sometimes in the form of community service, but can be victim specific. It is stressed that the victim focus on the offense not the offenders. The victim is also encouraged to think about questions they would like to ask the offender. Two or three dates are then chosen by the victim for the actual conference. The importance of bringing supporters is discussed and if there are to be any, their names, phone numbers and addresses are obtained. The victim is reassured throughout this pre-conference that they will be safe and that the whole process is confidential.

The supporters are sent a letter including a pamphlet, confirming their attendance and explaining their role. This letter is followed up by a phone call and perhaps a personal visit.

The same is done for the offender and his/her supporters. It is explained to the offender that this is an opportunity to make things right. A little brainstorming is done on ways the offender might do this. The offender is reassured they will be safe and that the process is confidential.

The importance of the agreement, should one be reached, is stressed to all parties.

Probation is always represented at these conferences and plays a vital role.

CONFERENCE

There are several goals of the conference. Primary is to provide the accountability factor for the juvenile. Learning the human consequences of the crime and meeting with the victim face-to-face certainly encourages this. Equally important is to give the victim closure. The conference provides a safe, neutral environment which will encourage healing communication. Healing is also begun by allowing the victims to express directly to the offender how the crime has affected them and their family.

Giving offenders the opportunity to explain the circumstances that led up to the crime and its consequences allows the victim to see the offender as a human not a monster.

Seeing first hand the distress, sadness, and remorse parents, grandparents and supporters of the offender feel, has a profound impact on both the offender and the victim.

All parties are encouraged to ask questions of each other.

Restitution is always brought up by the facilitator if not by the victim. This is done by the facilitator asking the victim near the end of the conference what they would like to come out of the conference.

The facilitator follows a script for the conference. This may not be followed in order, but it is very important that all questions be asked. The facilitator encourages feelings be expressed and explored.

The restitution is approved by probation before the agreement is written. This is important because probation then takes ownership in overseeing that the restitution happens.

The agreement is written, everyone at the table signs and receives a copy. Probation's copy becomes part of the offenders file and helps to complete their obligation to probation.

EXPERIENCES

As previously mentioned before, 43% of the victims have refused to conference. One victim was deemed inappropriate; he was still too angry.

When the crime is youth against youth, most youthful victims are unwilling to take part in the conference. It is not unusual for the parents to be eager to conference, but not the youth. Most young victims are afraid of retaliation, either by the offender or a group of the offender's friends. Some of the parents have refused the conference for the same reason. Their concern is not taken lightly as there is no way their safety can be guaranteed. Other victims do not see a personal benefit because the offense was so minor or restitution has already been made.

However, most stores, or convenience stores have participated, even paying the appropriate representative to participate. Every store that has participated has done it with the hope of making a difference to the youth. Besides the local stores, other victims have included officials representing the city, village and towns. These people have taken time to rearrange their full schedules to take part in the conferences.

Also, local churches, cemetery boards, Sheriff Department, schools, and private citizens have been willing to conference.

Every conference has been powerful in its own way. Many victims after the conference have related how great an experience it was and expressed hope that they have helped the youth to understand the impact their crime had on others.

One conference in particular we would like to share with you. The crime involved vandalism of nine victims' property. The victim who did agree to conference was an older lady, disabled and pretty much house bound.

At the pre-conference, she vented for over two hours. Eventually she calmed down and we discussed the process and the benefits. She agreed to participate.

When she sat down at the table for the conference, she eyed the boy and stated, "I will treat you respectfully because it was explained that was how the conference was to be done, but I am very angry."

She was a very articulate victim. She calmly explained how devastating the vandalism had been to her, how she had no money to replace the items, how one of the things the kids took was her medicine and it had been difficult for her to obtain a new prescription because she had no transportation.

She stated she had thought a lot about the restitution and decided she wanted labor. She explained that money meant nothing because it could come from the parents. So, in lieu of money, she asked that he come to her house, supervised, and wash the outside of her windows, 18 in all. Everyone agreed this was appropriate restitution.

A few days after the window washing was complete, she called. She was thrilled with the conferencing process. She was glad she had gotten to know the boy and stated: "I really like him. I invited him to come back."

The Juvenile Accountability Conference is a wonderful program. Like any other process, it is not perfect, but when it works, it really works.

Nassau County

The Nassau County Mediation Alternative Project continues to expand and receives strong support from all referral sources. As the summer months approach we expect an increase in referrals. Since our last report, dated November 15, 2002, we continue to realize increases in our small claims court component with 656 cases referred last quarter (October-December 2002). This quarter has indications of the same increase in referrals.

MAP's participation in the Long Beach after-school program began in late November and continues to be a much needed resource for the students participating. In addition, we have trained over 116 students in conflict resolution skills throughout Nassau County. We are also pleased to announce that EAC's Prevention and Intervention services are now listed with the New York City Board of Educations vendor list of services. We have received numerous calls from NYC schools for conflict resolution and anger management services, as well as staff development workshops for faculty.

MAP's Community component continues to grow. Outreach initiatives continue throughout Nassau County in order to maintain relationships with all referral sources. We continue to pursue new venues in the area of community mediation while discussing innovative

ways the mediation process may be utilized. We anticipate additional detailed information on pending collaborations in our next quarter report due May 15th.

Individual program component outreach remains ongoing. Our Special Education and Early Intervention Public Service Announcement continues to air on a regular basis through local area cable stations. In addition, beautiful special education mediation posters, provided by NYSDRA, are being distributed throughout the Long Island area.

EAC continues to seek out new and innovative ways of offering our existing services while developing new ones. In addition, we continue to pursue additional funding sources and are excited with the possibilities of future collaborations throughout the Nassau County area.

New York County - Center Mediation Services/Project Resolve (CMS/PR.)

Jorge Irizarry-Vizcarrondo joined Center Mediation Services/Project Resolve (CMS/PR.) as the director starting March 2003. Mr. Irizarry-Vizcarrondo studied law at Benjamin N. Cardozo where he earned admission to the mediation clinic, one of the first programs in the country to teach law students to serve as mediators.

It was through his mediation clinic professor, Lela Love that he learned about CMS/PR. After being certified by Safe Horizons (then Victim Services) Mr. Irizarry-Vizcarrondo joined CMS/PR's pool of mediators in 1999 and remained a volunteer with them until this new position. Mr. Irizarry has also mediated for Brooklyn Mediation Services, Manhattan Mediation Services and The Mediation Institute of the Harlem Community Justice Center. He has also tutored community mediators at Harlem for two consecutive years.

In January, CMS/PR launched new mediation information postcards as a new program outreach tool. In addition, CMS/PR conducted outreach presentation to staff of Beth Israel Medical Center's Detox and Rehabilitation and presentation about the services to the New York Police Department Office of the Deputy Commissioner for Community Affairs. Outreach in February was extended to a presentation to members of Manhattan Community Board #2, LGBT Sub-Committee.

In addition, the Focus of the February outreach was split towards the Transgender community some of the outreach was done while supporting some public activities in the Transgender community, and the HIV community in forums where we could maximize our outreach efforts, such as legal clinics and HIV/AIDS/LGBT service providers. CMS/PR also distributed program information to attendees of women's support group at the Franklin Women's Shelter

CMS/PR continues to enhance the skills and experience of its pool of mediators and staff; we have conducted workshops in the last quarter in Agreement Writing Skills and Ethical Issues in Mediation where Participants learned about the Ethical Standards of Professional Responsibility adopted by the Society of Professionals in Dispute Resolution. Mediator responsibilities around confidentiality, impartiality, conflict of interest and attending continued training to enhance skills were reviewed. Participants then grappled with these standards in a discussion of hypothetical mediation scenarios.

In addition, we are doing a series of mock Role-Play Mediation workshops that include an individualized review and debrief session. Staff provided feedback and suggestions for improving their skills. Volunteer mediators were able to visually see how their body language and hear how their voice tones impact greatly on the mediation session. Staff and volunteer

mediators have embraced the use of videotaping as an important learning tool in helping them achieve better mediation skills.

CMS/PR is in the process of both re-examining and refocusing its outreach to other community organizations in ways that will enhance and solidify its relationship with them. These efforts will allow CMS/PR to evaluate better, how they can address the conflict resolution needs of these organizations.

In addition, CMC/PR is working to develop a new outreach campaign designed to bring more clients to the center where they can access the services we provide.

New York & Kings Counties:Safe Horizon Mediation Program

Response to September 11th
By Kim Payne & Alan Gross

The tragic and horrifying events of September 11, 2001 will be etched in our memories for years to come. The city of New York was joined by the entire nation in mourning for the thousands who lost their lives. Eighteen months later, no one can fully describe the effects that unforgettable day had on countless lives, both directly and indirectly. As a community, we suffered through emotions that ranged from shock and fear to something akin to a steady ache in the very core of our being. For many, that suffering is ongoing.

Despite our personal grief in the wake of the attacks, Safe Horizon, which operates mediation programs in Kings and New York counties, immediately mobilized many of its 900+ staff members and recruited several thousand volunteers to assist victims at centers throughout the five boroughs and through numerous outreach programs. Within a few days, Safe Horizon had partnered with the September 11 Fund and, to date, has distributed more than $100 million dollars and thousands of hours of service, including mental health support and job counseling and placement to 50,000 victims and family members, displaced workers, residents, and entire communities affected by grief and hardship after the attacks

Recently, our mediators have utilized their special training and skills to handle disputes that arose directly from the disaster. Two of these programs, the 9/11 Small Business Court Assistance Project and the 9/11 Family Mediation Program, are unique in the New York metropolitan area, and exclusively use Safe Horizon trained and certified mediators to deal with various September 11-related conflicts.

The Family Mediation Program was developed after consultation with the Department of Justice's Victim Compensation Fund (VCF). An act of Congress passed shortly after September 11 authorized the VCF to compensate two categories of people: any individual who was physically injured; and the personal representative of anyone who was killed as a result of the terrorist-related airplane crashes that day. VCF staff reports that a significant number of family members are in conflict about which person should represent the victim's family before the VCF, and about the proposed distribution of funds.

Debra Shime, Associate Vice President of Safe Horizon Community Programs, and Elizabeth Clemants, Senior Director of the Safe Horizon Mediation Programs, discussed how disputes related to September 11th could best be handled through the mediation program. Shortly thereafter, we recruited four experienced volunteer mediators and conducted a training to provide them with information about 9/11 issues that were likely to arise during mediation sessions. At our first training, Tisha Hillman, a United Service Group service coordinator, and Steve

Murakami, an attorney representing clients before the VCF, spoke to the group. Volunteer mediator Alan Gross was appointed as coordinator to handle inquiries and intake.

Our first case was successfully mediated late in November 2002. We have publicized the mediation service on websites, including the VCF site, in newsletters distributed by family member groups, and through posters and flyers. In March 2003, Sandra Cuneo from Trial Lawyers Care, an organization of pro bono lawyers representing nearly 1,600 surviving families, and Adam Zimmerman, Deputy Special Master of the VCF, conducted a second training. Four additional volunteers were added to the team of mediators trained for this project.

Additional promotion for the program provides information regarding mediation to intake officials working for the VCF in Washington D.C. and New York City. These activities have resulted in a number of inquiries and have been developed into several mediation cases, mostly involving issues of distribution of funds and issues of visitation with children of people who died on September 11th. Many of the conflicts we have seen at Safe Horizon involve spouses and ex-spouses, or widow(ers) and other family members of the deceased.

The 9/11 Small Business Court Assistance Project was designed to provide mediation services to landlords and tenants in downtown Manhattan whose businesses were financially and logistically disrupted by the events of September 11th. Many businesses have fallen behind in their rent, leading landlords to commence non-commercial non=payment, or holdover eviction proceedings, in the Housing Part of the Civil Court of the City of New York, which has jurisdiction over these matters.

In order to expedite these hearings, The Honorable Fern Fisher, Administrative Judge of the New York City Civil Court, working with the Legal Aid Society; the Association of the Bar of the City of New York; Strook, Strook and Lavan; Lathan and Watkins; and Safe Horizon, together worked on a project that would address these unique situations. The mission of the project is to transform eviction proceedings into opportunities to explore mutually beneficial resolutions that avert business dislocation and contribute to the resurgence of the downtown areas affected by the September 11th tragedy. Safe Horizon provides experienced mediators to facilitate settlement in these small business/landlord cases. This project began in June 2002, and as of February 2003, the Safe Horizon Mediation Program has received 44 referrals and has mediated 26 cases.

Safe Horizon has been a leader in the crime victim assistance movement for the past 25 years. In that time, the agency has been involved in comprehensive and coordinated victim advocacy in the family, criminal, and supreme courts, as well as having a major role in projects that focus on the care and support of homeless and runaway youth. The attack on the World Trade Center is no exception. Through the 9/11 Family Mediation Program and the 9/11 Small Business Court Assistance Project, Safe Horizon Mediation Program is helping the city of New York to heal from wounds that cut wide and deep in our community.

New York County-Washington Heights Inwood Coalition Mediation Program

Our volunteer mediators are the most important part of our program; without them we cannot function. It is our policy to encourage our volunteers not only to conduct cases but also to pursue other projects that will benefit the people whom we serve. Hundreds of children in schools and residents in our community benefit from the fabulous and unconditional effort from our mediators.

The programs initiated by our mediators are:

Zoila Ramirez and Patricia Alvarez have taught Conflict Resolution in elementary schools for about 10 years. Urania Garcia Anderson has counseled parents and children for about 12 years, is still a mediator, and is responsible for the Special Education Mediation in our center. Maria Jessop, a transformative mediation trainer was responsible for editing "Mediation and Culture". Krister Lowe and Antony Hacking were responsible for the creation of the Peace Program. In conjunction with 12 students from the Columbia Conflict Resolution Program, they worked in nine different junior high schools for three years. Antony Hacking, Elana Weiss and Krister Lowe conducted Conflict Resolution Workshops for both Police precincts in the community for two years. Mavis Aldridge, Ph.D. is responsible for the Peer Mediation Program, in which 16 elementary students are helping to solve school problems. Adam Vane trained our peer mediators and was part of the Peace Program and still collaborates with us. Marlin Adams, Esq. is responsible for our mentorship and apprenticeship program and is one of our Labor Mediators. Myra Quiñones, after serving as translator, became a mediator and was part of the team of mediators working in the junior high schools for the Peace Program and the Center for Parents.

Others mediators who are collaborating with us, are: Soledad Lopez, Dora Maria Abreu, Nelson Castro, Angel R. Alvarez, Milagros Vicente, Patricia Flanagan, Mario Santamaria.

For these accomplishments, the Washington Heights-Inwood Coalition Mediation Program is honoring our volunteers and requests that the Honorable Assemblyman Adriano Espaillat award our mediators State Citations for Community Services during the ADR Day celebration in May 13, 2003

Oneida County - Peacemaker Program, Inc.

At Peacemaker Program in Oneida County, things are growing and expanding by leaps and bounds! In addition to our new ambitions, we have been receiving record numbers of referrals for our community and family mediation programs. In addition, we have noticed a trend in referrals for victim/offender restitution resolution. One of our goals for 2003 is to increase awareness about our less-utilized services, including Special Education mediation.

As of December 2002, we have instituted a divorce mediation program and advanced family mediation at the Supreme Court Level. This includes pre-divorce, divorce and post-divorce conflict resolutions. Marylynn Berger is heading up the project. She is the program coordinator and public relations director for Peacemaker Program and is a Nationally Certified Family and Divorce Mediator.

In addition, a new Parent/Child Mediation program for Oneida County PINS and Pre-PINS youth began with funding from the United Way of Greater Utica and National Association for Community Mediation. We will offer these services in collaboration with Family Court, Probation, School Partnership For Youth and other service agencies. Shannon Haggerty is the program coordinator. Shannon has a great deal of experience with teens and also coordinates adventure programs for the agency.

Oneida County was chosen as a pilot site for a Permanency Mediation Project. Peacemaker Program has been working with Oneida County Family Court, Department of Social Services, Law Guardians, Legal Aid and other attorneys to coordinate the implementation and use of the permanency program to benefit abused and neglected children in the child welfare system. The project is funded by the NYS Unified Court System ADR Office and the Office of

Children and Family Services. Marcia Knapp, the Permanency Mediator/Coordinator, was a public health nurse and a Court Appointed Special Advocate before joining the team.

Other exciting news is that the Peacemaker Program was chosen as the administrative CDRC for the New York State Department of Labor Mediation Program in partnership with NYSDRA and the NYS Department of Labor. We will coordinate mediation services for discrimination issues relating to the One-Stop Employment Centers and their contracting agencies. The Peacemaker Program will be coordinating these services for 12 Counties in Central NY, including Cayuga, Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Hamilton, Herkimer, Jefferson, Lewis, Oneida, Onondaga, Oswego and Madison.

At least two new programs are in the planning stages at the Peacemaker Program. The first is a Human Rights Mediation in partnership with the YWCA, Oneida County and the Mohawk Valley Refugee Center, to assist in resolving issues relating to human rights violations in employment, housing, social services and various other arenas. The second is the Attorney Client Fee Dispute Resolution Program in partnership with the Oneida County Bar Association. This joint venture will represent the first partnership between the local CDRC and Bar Association. Brenda Kenyon, Director of Services, and Tracy Austin, Coordinator has already been trained as a lay person arbitrator for the program.

In light of our growing services, we have also been busy training new mediators and arbitrators! Eight mediators were certified for 2003. In early March, 18 new mediators were trained and many have entered apprenticeship programs. In February, 15 people were trained in Arbitration by Steven LaLonde from Cornell University. Of the trainees, 9 have entered the apprenticeship program for arbitrators.

On March 5, the Peacemaker Program hosted a volunteer swearing in ceremony at City Court's Ceremonial Courtroom. During the ceremony, staff and volunteers recited oaths of confidentiality and commitment, mediators affirmed the mediator's oath and arbitrators took their oath. CASA volunteers and Child Custody Advocates also took their oaths. The ceremony was presided over by the Honorable Frank S. Cook, Family Court, and the Honorable John Balzano, City Court. Following the ceremony, volunteers, staff, family, friends and members of the Board of Directors celebrated at happy hour. We received tremendous feedback from volunteers and the Judges about the ceremony and our programs.

Onondaga County

Due to the changes in the PINS legislation in New York State, New Justice Services was asked to establish a dedicated JD/PINS mediation program for the Onondaga County Probation department and the Department of Social Services. New Justice has managed parent-child cases since the mid 1980's but the County Probation department wanted a dedicated program and staff to assist them in the diversion of these matters. New Justice already had funding for a part-time Family Intervention program through the New York State Department of Criminal Justice Services to provide either standard mediation or family conferencing intervention for truancy PINS cases. Because of the agency's experience with such matters, a program was quickly established and a coordinator was hired as of July 1, 2003. The program began to take cases almost immediately as the senior staff of the Onondaga County Administrative office had considerable experience working with such matters. During its first 5 months of operation, the program worked with 100 families.

If you have any questions regarding the Family Mediation Program please contact John Bruzdzinski, Program Coordinator or Willie T. Elliott, Family Intervener at 315-471-4676.

The Onondaga County Probation department is currently seeking to reorient its youth services to work from both "best-practices' and restorative justice approaches. New Justice Services already provides the Probation department with a Pro-social skills Character-education class called Project RESPECT, as well as a Peer-operated Youth Court that addresses low level crimes against property. With the development of the Family Mediation Project, the agency now offers a variety of programs that can assist a young person in re-establishing a relationship of trust and cooperation with their family, their school and their community. The agency is now working to fully integrate these various programs so that they are mutually reinforcing and able to directly meet the individual needs of the youth who are referred for services.

If you have any questions regarding these Youth Restorative Justice programs, please contact Nancy Phillips, ADR Director, or John W. McCullough, Executive Director at 315-471-4676 or email at njm001@dreamscape.com.

Otsego County

At Mediation Services, Inc. (MSI), we have shuffled our staff in the past year or so. In April 2002, our community dispute resolution service coordinator Mark Rogers left MSI to work in Burundi (Central Africa) for Search for Common Ground, a development agency based in Washington. We welcomed into Mark's post Rick Fisher, a graduate of George Mason University's master's degree program in conflict analysis and resolution. Rick had been working with MSI since October 2001, first as an administrative assistant and then as the service coordinator for a peer mediation program at Oneonta High School. Keith Fitzpatrick, who coordinated a peer mediation program at Oneonta Middle School, left our staff in May 2002 to take a full-time position at SUNY College at Oneonta. At the end of 2002, we said farewell to Tim Duerden as he took on a position with the Delaware County Historical Association. Taking over from Tim as one of the service coordinators of our family court mediation program was Tony LaBarca, who most recently worked as an assistant in the Camden County (New Jersey) courts. At the same time, we also welcomed one of our volunteer mediators Karl Meier in a part-time position.

Two service coordinators continue to offer mediation intake at the Otsego County Family Court. In addition, we continue to provide assistance to petitioners at the Family Court in the form of a staff member, Jeannie Furlan, who is permanently based there. The excellent working relationship we have developed there is bearing other fruit as well. MSI has been invited by Judge Brian Burns to provide facilitation services to the Otsego County Family Treatment Court for family group conferences that will take place in certain cases. It is expected that third-party mediators will be better able than caseworkers, attorneys or others to remain impartial. Efforts to involve our services with a new juvenile drug court and an existing youth court are also being pursued.

MSI's peer mediation programs at Oneonta Middle School and Oneonta High School have continued to serve the student population during the 2002-03 school year. Two 24-hour trainings were delivered in 2002, yielding a growing corps of youth mediators serving the school community. Students are being empowered, disputes are being settled, and referral sources are gradually becoming more diversified, but the work of raising awareness and dispelling misconceptions about mediation is a constant priority. MSI is preparing to offer school staff a

flexible new "menu of services" they can use for various situations in which traditional peer mediation might not be the best response. Due to the difficult financial situations facing schools, our Program Development Committee is focusing on a plan to obtain outside funding to expand dispute resolution services for youths throughout Otsego County.

In other program news, MSI has revised and reformatted its materials for the Divorce and Separation Program (DSP) to make them look more cohesive and professional. An outreach campaign to generate more DSP referrals is planned to take place during the next several months. The Rental Remedies program, developed in partnership with Opportunities for Otsego, has generated for us some additional cases involving landlord/tenant disputes. We have also been promoting and delivering our Conflict Management Planning for One service, which is a useful offering for people for whom we are unable to arrange a mediation. MSI offered a combined community and family court mediation training in the spring of 2002, and we are holding another basic mediation training in the spring of 2003. We also held an interesting in-service event in July 2002 aimed at developing a more reflective practice in our mediators by means of a videotaped mediation role-play that participants viewed and critiqued afterwards. We plan to hold a repeat performance very soon, and we have also integrated a reflective practice component into our recently revised apprenticeship plan. Finally, we are planning to honor and enjoy the company of our volunteers again this year with our second "RAVE" event (recognizing and affirming volunteer excellence).

Richmond County

In November, Candace Gonzalez was named Director of Conflict Resolution Services for New York Center for Interpersonal Development. She has been with The Center over six years and previously was the Director of Administrative Services. She will be completing her Masters degree in Public Administration from Columbia University in May.

The Center launched a new initiative this past September called The Mosaic Project. This initiative is a series of guided discussion on living successfully with diversity. The "study circles" convened in different locations around Staten Island. Participants were drawn from various ethnic, cultural, and religious communities. The goals of The Mosaic Project are: 1) to recognize that cultural diversity is a fact of lift on Staten Island; 2) to discover ways in which we all can benefit by that diversity; and 3) to share what we learn with others.

Kathleen Vaughan, assistant director of mediation, and volunteer mediators from the Staten Island Community Dispute Resolution Center Program participated in both Richmond County Civil and Family Courts this past October for New York City Mediation Settlement Day. The Center set up tables with information to educate the public about mediation and encouraged parties involved in court disputes to settle their cases through court-annexed mediation programs. Four cases that would have otherwise gone to trial were mediated that day.

New York Center for Interpersonal Development's Training Institute spearheaded by Adam Berner, director of training has been successfully conducting basic mediation, custody and visitation, family mediation, communication skills trainings and facilitation. Adam along with Center staff conducted a basic mediation and custody and visitation this past winter. The inactive instruction included discussion and role plays. One newly trained mediator commented, "It's a different role for me—less directive but more effective. Now, I'm looking forward to putting it into practice."

In December, The Center recognized Robert Lurie as the Mediator of the Year, Chrissy Reid and Shayamala Baskaran as Peer Mediators of the Year. These mediators contribute endless hours and their valuable skills to resolving conflicts. Also recognized were Luis Pavia and Kathleen Feola for 2003 Community Builder Award. Luis and Kathleen exemplify all that we value at the New York Center for Interpersonal Development.

For more information, please contact Candace Gonzalez, director of conflict resolution services at (718) 815-4557 or via email at cgonzalez@nycid.org

Rockland County

VCS has begun discussions regarding the development of a Family court mediation program after consultations with the office of ADR Programs in 2002. In March, VCS convened a meeting that included Executive Director Deborah Murnion, Phyllis Frank and Myrnia Bass-Hargrove from VCS and Carolyn Fish, Executive Director, Lynne Sheinken of the Rockland Family Shelter. We all agreed that the meeting was a huge step and welcomed the opportunity to be educated and to begin planning for a
service model that fully integrates the concerns of the domestic violence community with sound mediation practice. The meeting uncovered many challenges and obstacles that must be overcome as we move to offer this service to the Rockland community. Ms. Fish, Ms. Shenken, and Ms. Bass-Hargrove attended the Mediation and Domestic Violence conference sponsored by the Association of the Bar of the City of New York on March 31, 2003 and look forward to future discussions.

Last October, Kathryn Reukauf joined VCS as the new Program Director for the Conflict Management in the Schools Program. She conducted outreach to all eight Rockland County school districts and we offered conflict resolution assessments to all the school districts where VCS had previously provided training. Amidst concerns about impending budget cuts in education, most schools indicated that funding for comprehensive conflict resolution programs is almost non existent in the county. In one school district, the district conflict resolution program that provides classroom sessions, staff development and training, and peer mediation for grades 3-8th was abruptly discontinued. Another district where we had long standing relationship conducting peer mediation training for elementary students was also not funded for this school year. On the whole schools remain very interested in training students and staff but funding for comprehensive whole school programs is scarce and projected funding cuts will have a definite impact on how and if these services are provided. If conflict resolutions programs are to survive they will require collaborative efforts of communities and all the institutions that service them. To this end we have begun to work more closely with our county networks and collaboratives to evaluate how these essential services can be maintained.

St. Lawrence, Franklin, Clinton, Essex & Hamilton Counties

In St.Lawrence, Franklin, Clinton, Essex and Hamilton counties the ADR program is the Northern New York Centers for Conflict Resolution, Inc. We are beginning our 19th year providing dispute resolution services to the people of Northern New York. Our caseload has reached an all time high of over 1,200 cases this year. We have programs in Family Court (Custody/Visitation) in St.Lawrence, Franklin, Clinton and Essex counties. In addition, we have

City Court programs in St.Lawrence (Ogdensburg) and Clinton (Plattsburgh) with numbers that have also reached new heights this year. We also offer services in Lemon Law Arbitration, Surrogate Decision Making, Special Education, VESID, PINS, Victim-Offender and Parent/Child mediation.

We continue to offer training programs to local schools and agencies. We have experienced a renewed interest in PINS diversion and school matters in all 5 counties over the past year. Our volunteer pool continues to be strong in all of our counties in order to accommodate these needs.

Our staff is available to do presentations to schools and agencies to help spread the word; however, we seem to be quite well known in the North Country!

To contact our centers for further information please call: Kyle E. Blanchfield, J.D., Executive Director at: (315) 393-7079 in Ogdensburg or E mail at nnyccrkb@westelcom.com, Diana Dufresne, Coordinator, St.Lawrence County at:(315) 393-7079(Ogdensburg), Michele Bowen, Coordinator, Plattsburgh(Clinton Co) at:(518) 563-1227, Judith Good, Coordinator, Lake Placid(Essex Co.),(518) 523-7234, Diane Clark, Coordinator, Malone(Franklin Co.), (518) 483-1550, or Toni Morrison, Coordinator, Speculator(Hamilton Co.), (518) 548-8213.

Saratoga, Warren and Washington Counties

During the staff changes that took place this Summer/Autumn I made the decision to base all staff out of the Saratoga office. We continue to have an office in Warren County Family Court and are there 3 days/week. By consolidating operations out of the Saratoga Office 4 goals were accomplished: improving communication with all staff on a daily basis, establishing a clear uniformity of practice, creating a strong team, and reducing/eliminating duplication of effort. With the new staff coming in the timing was ideal. One unexpected benefit – with less time and energy expended on keeping the team informed and supported in 2 locations there was more time for outreach to the counties.

During the past several months we've made a concerted effort to reach out andengage service providers who could be referral sources for us in Washington County. I spoke to the Washington County Youth Coalition in February. The Youth Coalition brings together a broad spectrum of service providers in Washington County including teachers, probation officers, social service providers, etc. As a result we are conducting in-services to a child care provider network, a clergy association, and a domestic violence program. We will also be addressing the Washington County magistrates at their monthly meeting.

In February and March this year we trained 16 people in a combined Community and Custody/Visitation Mediation Training. We are utilizing actors volunteering as participants during mediations as part of the apprenticeship. This combination training is essential to increasing the number of family mediators available in Warren and Washington counties. We had a terrific group of trainees. Any concern I may have had about introducing that amount of material in a single training was alleviated by the energy and enthusiasm of the participants as well as their positive feedback in evaluations.

In April of this year, Rebecca Goldstein of NYSDRA and I will offer a workshop at the Families Together Conference. These families include people with special needs. Our workshop will address Special Education Mediation. We are also working with one of our mediators, a former principal and director of pupil services, to develop a plan to provide advocacy and information about mediation to CSE, principals, superintendents, teachers, etc.

We will be adding a training component to our services in autumn. This will enable the program to offer more in the way of community outreach, and generate income from training through agencies, companies, schools, communities, colleges and adult education outlets.

Schenectady County

CRS staff have been doing increased outreach to the Schenectady County Community, providing information about our many mediation services. All courts in the county have received brochures and information on making referrals to mediation. Some courts have been visited by staff to discuss how best we can serve their needs. Schenectady City Small Claims Court has a full time judge, Honorable Guido Loyolla. Judge Loyolla, a strong supporter of the community mediation program in the past, was elected to the new full time position this past November. Working daily with Community Mediation staff and volunteer mediators, Judge Loyolla continues to direct parties to Mediation whenever possible. Niskayuna Town Justices, Honorable Daniel Burns and Paul Zonderman work with court staff and Community mediation staff, referring appropriate cases to mediation. Volunteer Mediators have the opportunity to work in Niskayuna Town Court on Wednesday evenings. Judge Loyolla and Zonderman are each scheduled to do an April in-service on the topic of "Mediating in Court".

Family Mediation staff are available during the afternoon petition filing times, for questions, intakes and bench referrals. Family Mediation, a voluntary, private, neutral and child centered process for making decisions about one's family, just started its' sixth year of direct services to the Family Court staff. Schenectady County families can choose to mediate Custody, Visitation, Child Support (petition) cases as well as PINS cases sent from the PINS Diversion Team. Hearing Examiner Colleen Quirion, Esq., recently trained nine volunteer mediators in "Child Support 101". County residents can access both the Family Mediation and PINS/ Parent-Teen Mediation programs, even if they have nothing pending in court. Diane Herrmann coordinates the Supreme Court- Separation/Divorce Mediation program. Couples are assisted through the process of ending their marriages in a mutually decided, respectful, and non-adversarial manner. Diane has been working closely with the Schenectady Bar Association, Legal Aid Services and Supreme Court staff. A regional in-service was held in January for Divorce Mediators on "Finance Training for Divorce Mediators".

Ms. Doreen Gabriele coordinates the Schenectady High School Peer Mediation program. This very successful and well respected program has handled over 275 student disputes since September 4, 2002. Ms. Gabriele works with a diverse pool of 56 students, from all socio-economic and academic levels. These student pairs, many prior disputants, are able to gain the trust of their peers and facilitate problem solving discussions. Peer Mediation has been written into the school's Code of Discipline. We have an active peer mediation programs in all three Schenectady Middle School, Cities In School Academy (Alternative Program), and several elementary schools. Conflict Resolution Services staff provide county students with workshops on Communication and Problem Solving. Schools administrators have been referring multi-party cases, involving students and their parents, to Community Mediation.

As the program expands, the need for additional and advanced training must be addressed. In 2002, we provided PINS/ Parent-Teen Advanced Mediation training to thirty Capital region volunteers and center staff. Twelve volunteers completed the Custody/Visitation, Parenting Plan Mediation training last November. Both of these trainings were led by Duke Fisher, an extremely talented mediator/trainer.

CRS is a partner in the HUD-ROSS, Government Law Center of the Albany Law School collaboration with local CDCRP and Municipal Housing Authorities. The three year program goals are to train housing residents and staff in Basic Mediation skills and provide them with mediation services. To date, five HUD-Ross Basic Mediation training classes have been

completed. This partnership has had many benefits such as building a more diverse pool of mediators, fostering another referral source outside of the courts, assisting tenant groups with leadership development and providing Schenectady Municipal Housing Authority with a proposed Hearing Officer training and a referral list.

For more information about Mediation and other ADR services for Schenectady County, please contact Elizabeth Henderson, Director of Conflict Resolution Services; e-mail Loj@capital.net or (518) 346-1281.

Tompkins, Chemung & Schuyler Counties

Year 2003 is special for the Community Dispute Resolution Center of Chemung, Schuyler and Tompkins Counties. It marks the agency's twentieth year of service to the community. Much has changed in the two decades that have passed since CDRC opened its doors. And much has stayed the same.

The idea that spurred CDRC's formation was the notion that people should have an informal, quick and inexpensive option for dealing with the conflicts between them. Mediation offered that opportunity by providing people with someone who could help them have the most productive conversation they could. Often that allowed people to resolve their differences. If not, other options remained available. CDRC chose to be community-based -- recruiting and training community volunteers to act as its mediators. The community members trained in mediation skills would be able to put those skills to use in all of their interactions, not just in the formal mediations held at CDRC.

Several things came together to allow a smooth start for CDRC. New York's court system was encouraging communities to start mediation centers. By providing mediation as an alternative or adjunct to court action, the courts hoped to focus its resources on the situations that required legal action to resolve. No one in Tompkins County offered mediation, and Cornell's Center for Religion, Ethics and Social Policy was willing to sponsor this work.

So in September of 1983, CDRC began as a project of CRESP with a $20,000 grant from New York's Unified Court System. Co-founders Jeff Furman and Judy Saul split one full-time staff position. They recruited a group of willing volunteers, brought in a trainer from an existing mediation center in Syracuse and trained CDRC's first mediators.

CDRC's history has been marked by many milestones, including:

- 1986: began to work with area schools on peer mediation and staff training
- 1988: began Parent-Teen Mediation
- 1991: become an independent non-profit
- 1992: began Parenting Mediation, allowing separated or divorce parents to work together on parenting plans
- 1996: began Interface to more effectively respond to conflicts within organizations and among communities
- 1996: developed CHOICES, anger management training for young people
- 1997: became a three-county agency, providing services in Chemung, Schuyler and Tompkins Counties
- 1998: CDRC's mediators received the Agda Osborn award for Community Service presented by Ithaca's Family & Children's Services
- 1999: provided full-time staff person to newly formed Ithaca Drug Court team

- 1999: presented first annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Peacemaker Award to Marcia Fort, director of GIAC
- 2001: became host site for Parents' Apart©, a class for separating or divorcing parents
- 2002: celebrated five years of service in Chemung and Schuyler Counties

The changes are remarkable. In 1983 CDRC consisted of two people splitting one position, supplemented by 12 volunteer mediators. In 2003, CDRC employs sixteen people in three counties, supplemented by 70 volunteer mediators and 28 CHOICES mentors. Sixteen of our volunteers have been mediating with the agency for over ten year. CDRC's "alumni" mediators number 367. During 1984, CDRC's first full year, the agency handled 77 cases, compared to 1200 in 2002. Mediations, which numbered 19 in 1984, were at 440 in 2002. CDRC served a total of 377 people in 1984. In 2002, the agency served almost 8,000 people -- 3,500 through mediation and CHOICES casework, 650 through Interface and 3,850 through outreach and training.

But CDRC's mission is essentially unchanged. We understand the ways in which conflict makes each of us less than our best selves. By fostering constructive responses to conflict, we help people get clear about their own needs, the perspectives of others and, weighing both, make the best decisions they can. Twenty years has proven that ***talk works!***

The year 2003 will be a year of celebration for CDRC. There is much to celebrate and many to thank. But there is also much more to do. We look forward to the challenges ahead and are confident of our ability to meet them.

Westchester County

The past year has been one of tremendous growth for the Westchester Mediation Center. Not only have we increased our volume of cases in community mediation by serving more courts in the County (thanks to the efforts of Maria Gomez, Manager of Outreach) but we have also broadened the scope of the types of cases that are addressed. With the assistance of the Unified Court System, the past year has allowed us to establish both custody/visitation and PINS pilot programs, coordinated by Carmen Rizvi. Both of these programs have been in full swing and the volume of cases has now moved past the pilot stage and provides a steady flow of cases into the Center.

Custody/visitation in particular has been rewarding in that it incorporates the spirit of mediation in its purest form. Empowering parents to make decisions about the future of their children as opposed to relying on a court has allowed parents to take responsibility and to craft creative, thoughtful, intelligent solutions. Parents in custody/visitation mediation have met the challenge almost 100% of the time.

PINS mediation is more difficult because we don't see those cases until the family structure has been badly damaged. Nonetheless, we are pleased with the progress we make on some of the cases, and look forward to finding new ways to help parents and children in serious conflict.

Restorative Justice is our newest initiative, and that has been nothing less than thrilling. Headed by Monica Rickenberg, a former family court attorney, this program has managed to be funded two years in a row by the Tow Foundation and has received enthusiastic support from the Department of Probation. At the moment we are working almost exclusively with Family Court

Probation as a referral source for the Victim/Offender Group Conferencing component of our Restorative Justice Initiative. However, we have also been funded by DCJS and the Department of Labor to work with young people between the ages of 14 and 24, coming out of incarceration or placement, as well as youth deemed as high-risk. We have a case manager, Pilar Blanck, who is working with these youngsters to address such key issues as education, substance abuse treatment, employment, and possibly housing.

The Eviction Prevention Program of the Center warrants mentioning, not so much for its growth, but for its ability to survive the outrageous cutbacks levied upon it as a result of statewide budget cuts. Community-based organizations, while receiving only 6% of the discretionary budget, absorbed 86% cuts handed down. It is to the credit of Mary Rowson, Supervisor of the Center's Eviction Prevention Program, and her entire staff that this program has managed to maintain its same level of service in a spite of a severe financial handicap.

We are pleased to have been designated as the community dispute resolution center for the Department of Labor's mediation program for the Mid-Hudson region. Along with her many other duties as Senior Mediation Coordinator, Enma Confreda will be heading up this program. Several mediators have already been trained in this specialty area, and we have a number of others requesting similar training.

The School Mediation program has also experienced tremendous growth. We currently have full-time coordinators in all nine of the Yonkers middle and high schools, in addition to training peer mediators in other parts of the County.

The School Mediation Program has conducted approximately 400 mediation sessions in the Yonkers secondary schools since January 2003. The Program has also trained 27 Yonkers middle and high school students as peer mediators during that time.

On March 13, 2003, 14 peer mediators from the Yonkers high schools participated in the county-wide Youth Action Convention sponsored by the Westchester Children's Association and the Westchester Youth Council. The convention featured a variety of workshops, including two conducted on peer mediation by Gorton High School mediators Nathaniel Quintero, Leanna Foster, Yasmin Batirbek and Jillene Delaguila. The workshops were very successful and well received.

In addition, Aisha Everett, the school mediation coordinator at Commerce Middle School is organizing the Young Minds Coming Together mini-conference for Yonkers middle school mediators. The mini-conference is scheduled for late April 2003.

Dan Rayner, Supervisor of the Center's School Mediation Program and the PINS Mediation Program, is delighted to welcome Ryan Pellow as Training and Special Projects Coordinator.

CONTACT INFORMATION BY COUNTY

County	Phone Number
Albany	(518) 446-0356
Allegany	(607)373-5133
Bronx	(718) 585-1190
Broome	(607) 724-5153
Cattaraugus	(716) 373-5133
Cayuga	(315) 252-4260
Chautauqua	(716) 483-7774
Chemung	(607) 734-9087
Chenango	(607) 336-5442
Clinton	(518) 563-1227
Columbia	(518) 828-0047
Cortland	(607) 753-6952
Delaware	(607) 746-6351
Dutchess	(845) 471-7213
Erie	(716) 883-5050
Essex	(518) 523-7234
Franklin	(518) 483-1550
Fulton	(518) 842-4202
Genesee	(585) 344-2550
Greene	(518) 943-0523
Hamilton	(518) 548-8213
Herkimer	(315) 894-9917
Jefferson	(315) 785-0333
Lewis	(315) 376-7991
Livingston	(585) 243-7007
Madison	(315) 361-4438
Monroe	(585) 546-5110
Montgomery	(518) 842-4202
Nassau	(516) 489-7733
Kings	(718) 834-6671
New York-Safe Horizon	(212) 577-1742
New York-Project Resolve	(212) 620-7310

County	Phone Number
New York-Washgtn Hts.	(212) 781-6722
Niagara	(716) 297-3083
Oneida	(315) 724-1718
Onondaga	(315) 471-4676
Ontario	(585) 396-0840
Orange	(845) 294-8082
Orleans	(716) 883-5050
Oswego	(315) 343-8370
Otsego	(607) 443-1672
Putnam	(845) 225-9555
Queens	(607) 724-5153
Rensselaer	(518) 687-0056
Richmond	(718) 815-4557
Rockland	(845) 634-5729
St. Lawrence	(315) 393-7079
Saratoga	(518) 584-6361
Schenectady	(518) 346-1281
Schoharie	(518) 234-2568
Schuyler	(607) 535-7637
Seneca	(315) 396-0840
Steuben	(607) 776-6976
Suffolk	(631) 265-0490
Sullivan	(845) 794-3377
Tioga	(607) 687-8222
Tompkins	(607) 273-9347
Ulster	(845) 331-6136
Warren	(518) 793-6212
Washington	(518) 793-6212
Wayne	(315) 946-7500
Westchester	(914) 963-6500
Wyoming	(716) 373-5133
Yates	(315) 396-0840