



# The Mediation Monitor Issue 2 October-December 2013

*Empowering people and organizations with alternative methods for resolving disputes.*

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## Happy Holidays

**Holidays can be a source of great joy as well as a source of great stress. When stress kicks in it can create conflict, and of course none of us want to spend our holidays trying to resolve conflict with loved ones and friends. But if conflict is unavoidable, here are some tips you can use to resolve conflict over the holidays.**

- ◆ **Breathe first—long inhales and long exhales calm your central nervous system.**
- ◆ **Pick your battles carefully—make sure the conflict is worthy of your time and energy before you engage.**
- ◆ **Use your conflict resolution skills—listen, ask questions to clarify information, and summarize what you've heard.**
- ◆ **Look for common ground— don't focus completely on your differences.**

- ◆ **Focus on interests— yours and theirs.**
- ◆ **Think of as many options as possible for resolving the conflict.**
- ◆ **Make an agreement to resolve the conflict in a way that is mutually satisfactory.**
- ◆ **And last but not least, stay open to offering an apology as a way to take responsibility for your part in the conflict.**

***Keep your holidays happy and peaceful...***

***Wishing you a joyful holiday season from the Board and Staff of Neighborhood Mediation Center***

## NMC Name the Newsletter Contest Winner!

*Several weeks ago the Board and Staff of NMC asked NMC Volunteers to name our Newsletter. We received several wonderful submissions, and on December 10 the NMC Board of Directors selected the winning name. The winning entry as you can see at the top of this quarter's newsletter is The Mediation Monitor. Volunteer Ken Jordan, profiled in our first newsletter, submitted the winning entry, and for this Ken won a \$25.00 gift certificate to Whole Foods. Thank you for your submissions and Congratulations Ken!*

## NMC Adult Guardianship Mediation Training & Pilot Program

In September of this year, Family Court Judge Frances Doherty approached NMC about collaborating on an Adult Guardianship Mediation Pilot Program. Guardianship issues can range from conflicts between family members that involve who should be appointed a guardian to finding workable alternatives to guardianship. Courts are limited in respect to what they can do in these cases, and mediation opens a forum for families to talk, to discuss options, and to decide on the best option for the family. As we know, the opportunity to maintain control over decision making is one of the greatest benefits of mediation.

On November 22, 2013 illustrious trainers Margaret Crowley and Jeanette Belz provided a free eight-hour Adult Guardianship Mediation Training for NMC volunteers. Seven experienced NMC mediators and 8 new NMC mediators attended the training. The feedback was fabulous. Not only did NMC mediators appreciate the opportunity to attend the training and learn something new, most said they felt ready, willing, and able to mediate adult guardianship cases.

We are honored and feel quite privileged to be a part of this collaboration with the Family Court, and we recognize the importance of this timely program. For more information, please contact the Neighborhood Mediation Center at 775-788-2127.

### Upcoming Training



### Beginning Mediation Training

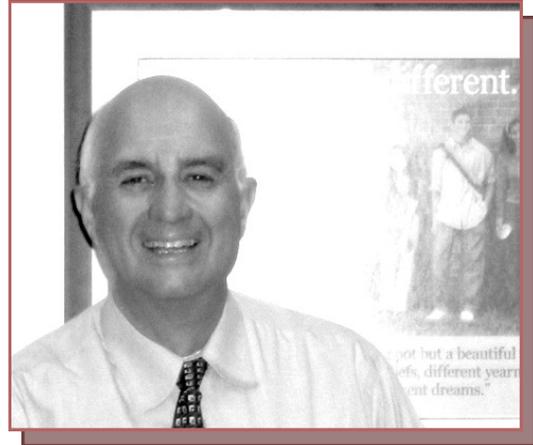
*The next beginning mediation training class will be held in April from the 23rd to the 27th . Trainers Betsy Kosier, Margaret Crowley, and Jeanette Belz will return again to provide the community with state of the art skills and hands-on training. This training is a collaboration between Neighborhood Mediation Center and the University of Nevada Reno. Stay tuned for more details.*

*This year we have all been shocked and saddened by two tragic events in our community. The violence at both Sparks Middle School and the Renown Campus have taken a heavy toll on the community, and families have been devastated. We may never really know why these individuals decided to resolve their conflicts in the way that they did, and we have no way of knowing whether an attempt to resolve the conflicts through mediation may have prevented these tragedies. However, what we do know as mediators is that conflicts large and small have been successfully mediated as anger falls away and understanding and options for resolution increase. Every year the NMC Board and Staff set a goal for the number of cases NMC volunteers will mediate. This year our goal was 150 cases and we mediated 138—not bad. This year our goal is again 150 cases and so far we have mediated 70 cases—almost half way there... Mediation is a highly effective process for parties who are unable to work through conflict on their own. Let's all do what we can to increase peace and safety in our community by spreading the word about the remarkable process of mediation.*

Dr. Romo has resided in Nevada since 1972. He has held the positions of Assistant Professor of Foreign Languages and Literatures (Spanish and Portuguese) at the University of Nevada, Reno; Operations Manager for the Comprehensive Employment Training Act (CETA) and he was an appointee of former Governor and Senator Richard H. Bryan as Administrator of the Nevada State Youth Services Division. He served as the Assistant Administrator for the Nevada Equal Rights Commission and Training Manager at the Nevada Department of Employment, Training and Rehabilitation. In October 2004 he became the Director of Equity and Diversity at Truckee Meadows Community College (TMCC) until his retirement in July of 2008. During 2009-2010, Dr. Romo was the Director/Chair for the Northern Nevada Human Resources Association's (NNHRA) Diversity Committee/Conference. Since 2010 Dr. Romo has served as the Chair for the Neighborhood Mediation Center's (NMC) Board of Directors. He is a certified mediator.

Dr. Romo's Ph.D. and M.A. degrees are from Tulane University and his B.A. is from the University of New Mexico, his native state. He was a Fulbright-Hayes scholar in Lisbon, Portugal, Woodrow Wilson Honorary Scholar, and the recipient of the NDEA Title IV Fellowship.

Dr. Romo has conducted over 800 training sessions in all areas of Equal Employment Opportunity, including investigations, multiculturalism, and diversity and inclusion. These subjects have been presented in English, Spanish and Portuguese. He is also able to conduct mediation in these languages. Dr. Romo has taught Spanish classes for TMCC, and he hosted and moderated a public affairs bilingual television program, El Mundo Hispano through KOLO-TV.



***"Through mediation--a proven tool in dispute resolution--the NMC has, for the past 12 years, successfully provided free mediation services to our community primarily through the use of volunteers. The NMC is grateful for the work our volunteers, our Board of Directors and our staff have done and will continue to do in years to come."***

## *Upcoming Conferences*

### **International Conference on Mediation**

#### **Conference Dates**

*5th to 8th February 2014  
Frankfurt, Germany*

**Website:** [http://www.remep.mpg.de/en/calendar/upcoming\\_events.html](http://www.remep.mpg.de/en/calendar/upcoming_events.html)

**Contact person:** Carolin Hillemanns

*The aim of the conference is to explore the variety of concepts, modes and manifestations of mediation in current as well as in historical settings regarding the interdependences and interrelations with the concepts of retaliation and punishment.*

**Organized by:** Max Planck Institute for European Legal History



## NEIGHBORHOOD MEDIATION CENTER

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### SEEKING NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTIONS

If you would like to contribute to the NMC newsletter, we welcome articles, and information on upcoming trainings and conferences, as well as other events and information related to mediation and conflict resolution. Please send us your ideas for review.

Please let us know if you would like to be added to the NMC Newsletter electronic mailing list.

NMC is primarily funded by Washoe County from court filing fees.

### *From the Director's Corner ...*

**Impartiality**— So what does that mean? Well... it means many things that mediators may not be aware of, and unawareness can actually cause the perception of bias. With that said let's explore mediator impartiality, or what could give the perception of bias on the part of a mediator.

**Professional Distance:** This is a small community, and therefore it is not unusual for a mediator to know a judge or two who just happens to be presiding over Small Claims Court on a day when that mediator attends. Keeping professional distance means the mediator does not have a friendly, personal, or legal conversation before or after court with the judge.

**Confidentiality:** This means that what is said in the mediation room stays in the room—mediators should not at any time discuss the mediation with anyone associated with the court. The only exception to confidentiality is in the case of allegations of abuse, neglect, or threats of harm to a participant, and if that is the case, the mediator should stop the mediation, send the parties back to court and report the incident to NMC staff who will take the appropriate action. You are also free to debrief your mediation with NMC staff—in fact, we encourage you to do so either in person after court, or by phone.

Impartiality also means that as a mediator you refrain from any kind of social or business contact with participants for a minimum of 45 days after a mediation.

Another area of impartiality that is critical to be aware of is in keeping your biases at bay. If you are making assumptions about where a mediation might be going, you are more than likely to ask leading questions. To avoid this, keep an open mind and refrain from making assumptions about the parties, the issues in conflict, and how parties might choose to resolve their conflict.

The following link is to the Model Standards for Mediators, 2005

[http://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/migrated/dispute/documents/model\\_standards\\_conduct\\_april2007.authcheckdam.pdf](http://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/migrated/dispute/documents/model_standards_conduct_april2007.authcheckdam.pdf)

## *When Neighbors Don't Seem so Neighborly*

Noise from barking dogs, yard equipment, and enthusiastic partyers, overgrown trees, unmaintained fences, and messy yards are all sources of conflict in neighborhoods. What to do? You could first try approaching your neighbor in a friendly manner, but if this is not within your comfort zone, or you've tried this approach without success, you may want to consider mediation.

Mediation offers neighbors the ability to sit down and talk about concerns and options for solution with the help of an unbiased third party, the mediator. Mediators are skilled in opening communication between people in conflict and in guiding them through a process that helps the parties clarify the issues, look for common ground, and explore solutions that meet the needs of everyone.

We can't pick our neighbors, but we can choose peaceful means of settling our conflicts. Before it goes too far, contact the Neighborhood Mediation Center.

*Keeping the  
peace in the  
neighborhood*

