



Heartland Mediators Association

Newsletter for Midwest Mediators

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P.O. Box 14971
Lenexa, KS 66285
913-956-7620

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Linda Laird
ksmediationconcepts
@gmail.com

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deborah.medlock@jocogov.
org

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2013 Heartland Mediators Association

A Message From the President: New Year Kicked Off With Enthusiastic Start

Heartland Mediators Association has gotten off to a good start this year and we're hoping you will stay connected with us in order to learn all the new and savored things about conflict resolution in and around our region.

The new board met for their first time on June 6 with all nine board members present. We'll be meeting again in early August to continue what we've started.

The Board has a lot of great ideas about what it wants to plan for upcoming trainings and what HMA can do in the future.

Board members have had their

ears to the ground listening to all of you who have shared what you want to see in your organization. We are listening.

Please continue to share what you would like to see at HMA trainings or on our website. And keep those newsletter articles coming. We want to hear what you are doing in the field.

For those who might want to plan ahead please note on your calendars these possible dates: Oct. 4 for an afternoon of training in Manhattan; Feb. 21 for an afternoon of training in Topeka and the

continued on page 2

Judge Pierron Among Those Honored in April With HMA Awards

HMA annually honors members of the community as well as its own members with special recognition for their service to the field of alternative dispute resolution. This past year is no exception.

The President's Award is bestowed on individuals or agencies (government, business or media) that have contributed significantly in the past year by increasing public awareness pertaining to conflict resolution. The focus of this award is to recognize a non-HMA member in the region encompassing the Heartland membership (Kansas, Nebraska, Iowa and Missouri).

The 2013 honor went to the Honorable G. Joseph Pierron of the Kansas Court of Appeals who has long championed the importance of a fair, impartial and independent judiciary and has been a friend and advocate for the children of Kansas. For many years he has also championed the use of mediation and other alternative dispute resolution methods as an important part of the judicial system.

Judge Pierron was born in Kansas City, Kansas, and grew up in Olathe. He graduated from Rockhurst College of Kansas City and received his Juris Doctorate from the University of Kansas School of Law in 1971. Prior to his appointment to the Kansas Court of Appeals in 1990, he served as a district attorney in Johnson County and as a district judge in both Olathe and Spring Hill.

continued on page 3

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CASA volunteer moves to mediation

My name is Deborah Medlock and I am honored to be your President-Elect. I was asked to tell you a little about myself so here is my mediation journey in a nutshell.

In the mid-90's I decided to become a volunteer for CASA. Court Appointed Special Advocates are volunteers who work with children who are involved in the court system because of child abuse/neglect or because of a high level of conflict between their parents.

I was excited to become a constant, safe person in the life of a child (or sibling set) who had case workers and lots of other folks involved in their difficult situations who were constantly changing. The lengthy training process made me concerned that while the work was rewarding, it might be overwhelming and sad.

One of the speakers during that training was Gary Kretchmer. Gary appeared to have a great ability to balance between caring compassionately and understanding the limits. I knew I needed a similar ability and wondered what gave him that.

While talking about another topic, Gary mentioned he was Director of Domestic Court Services in Johnson County and he worked as a mediator to help parents make decisions for their children. I had never heard of mediation before, and in this context he didn't say much about it.

I decided to find out more about mediation and began asking my friends if any of them knew

about it. In my circle of friends and acquaintances at that time, most had never heard of mediation. One of my friends, a family therapist, had heard a little about it and mentioned she knew there was a mediation training coming up.

I attended the first mediation class that was offered at Johnson County Community College. I sat in the class listening to the instructors talk about the process and became hooked.

I had only one small problem – I was a strong avoider of conflict. I have since learned many of us mediators began our lives as avoiders. I decided it was time to conquer this fear and thus started traveling down a path that has changed my life.

I remember being told that reframing was one of the most important skills any mediator could possess. I began to practice. I would watch television or movies and mentally reframe what characters were saying. I would listen to friends talk and reframe their comments.

I was like a little kid with a new toy. Whenever I was, any dialogue whether written or oral, I would reframe. Because there is a silly part of my personality, I would sometimes reframe things in odd ways, looking for humor wherever I could find it. I began volunteering at small claims court. I took more mediation classes. I loved this process, working with people to empower them to make their lives better. Finally the day came when there was an opening at Court Services and I interviewed with Gary.

I have worked at Court Services since 2000; Gary was a wonderful mentor for me. I have worked with thousands of families.

It's a little cheesy but over a decade later I still wake up most weekday mornings before the alarm goes off, excited I get to spend another day meeting with my clients. I bring together two parents, who usually would rather not see or speak to each other, and ask them to set aside their differences at least temporarily to focus on their little ones.

If each of us does our little part to make the world a better place, then we can all benefit from the change. I guess I am more Pollyanna than I care to admit. But I suspect that for most of us, at heart we are all just trying to do our part to bring a little more peace into the world.

Deborah Medlock may be reached at deborah.medlock@jocogov.org

President's Message

continued from page 1

month of April for a special two-day training and our annual meeting.

We are always interested in knowing about those of us who do training so please offer up what you would like to learn at training. If you would like to add a proposal for training we also want to hear from you.

One question that came up during our recent board meeting was "Is HMA a professional organization or a standards organization?"

We'd like comments from members on this subject.

You may email them to any of the officers on this newsletter or to Janet Lhuillier, our Executive Director.

Linda Laird is president of HMA and may be reached at kmediationconcepts@gmail.com

Pierron, Kretchmer Among Special Honorees

Continued from page 1

Through the years, Judge Pierron has received many awards for his leadership, public service and dedication to the youth of Kansas, including the Liberty Bell Award from the Shawnee County Bar Association, the Kansas Boys State Governor's Award, and the Kansas District Judges Association Community Outreach and Education Award. He has also received numerous awards in recognition of his outstanding contribution to promoting public awareness of the importance of a fair, impartial and independent judiciary.

Judge Pierron was appointed by the Kansas Supreme Court in 1992 to chair an Alternative Dispute Resolution Committee to provide a recommendation to the court on how to use mediation in state courts. He is the current chair of the Appellate Court Mediation Committee, which received approval from the Kansas Supreme Court to establish an Appellate Court mediation pilot project in Kansas. This project will experiment with the use of mediation on an appellate level and will make a recommendation to the court of Appeals and the Kansas Supreme Court. Judge Pierron has made a major contribution to the field of alternative dispute resolution in Kansas and deserves our support for his tireless advocacy for mediation.

Along the way, Pierron worked hand-in-hand with the mediator who was selected to receive a new award for lifetime achievement among its founding members upon his retirement.

Gary Kretchner retired from his work at Johnson County Court Services in March, and it is his work with families in Johnson County and with HMA that prompted his nomination for a special award by several members who have worked with him many years.

Kretchmer was among those first HMA members serving as President for 1991-92. He earned HMA's coveted Acorn Award in the 1990s as well. It was easy to add the Mediator Emeritus honor as he steps out of active work helping the children of divorced couples in conflict by helping the parents communicate.

One of his co-workers commented: "I think it would be outstanding to honor him with a special award for his years of contribution to the field of mediation and the children of Johnson County." Kretchmer was awarded the Mediator Emeritus Award for his life's work in mediation and with Heartland Mediators Association.

HMA also selects one of its own to honor for their work within the organization. This year's Acorn Award was passed to Barbara Schmidt, who spent many

years in the Newton and Wichita, KS, area working with victim offender, parent adolescent and domestic mediation. She recently retired from KIPCOR and moved to Wisconsin to be closer to her children.

In the 1980s when she was trying to get a VOM program going in Wichita, her nominator said. "Schmidt spent a lot of time and energy getting something put together with spit and duck tape." She has been active ever since and ended her mediation career running the Community Mediation Program in Harvey County. She was on the Supreme Court's Advisory Council on Dispute Resolution for six years and was one of the most dependable and active members. She has done a lot of good towards fostering a mediation community in Kansas.

Another nominator said she worked to get programs going in other areas and was "among the most dependable" among mediators and board members.

The Margaret 'Peg' Nichols Volunteer of the Year Award is given to a volunteer mediator and this year the award was expanded to include non-members.

Deb Fitzhugh of Topeka has been volunteering as a mediator for more than 15 years. She took her training through the state and has continued to assemble a broad range of training including community conflict, school conflict, tenant landlord, parent adolescent and domestic. She has volunteered for the Safe Streets mediation program and KCSL program over the years.

The HMA Board of Directors will give Deb Fitzhugh a free HMA membership for 2013 – 2014.

The Peer Mediation Award had no nominees this year and the Board of Directors would like to challenge its members to find or create peer mediation programs in the schools in our area.

The nominees may be programs in schools in grades Kindergarten through grade 12 that have active peer mediation programs. Heartland is interested in identifying schools with peer mediation as a means of resolving conflicts between its students.

More fundamentally we are interested in schools providing a practical educational mediation experience for their students. These programs provide hands-on opportunities for student mediators and students in conflict as well as others in the student body to experience or learn of the benefits of alternative dispute resolution. Heartland Mediators Association is also interested in helping schools establish and maintain mediation programs.

HMA as an organization hopes this award may be given again next year.

Linenbergers Take Winding Path to Meet Highest Goals

Melissa and Shaun Linenberger may be fairly new to the world of mediation but have been mediating life together for 18 years. Both from the Manhattan area, Shaun and Melissa met through a mutual friend in 1995. They were married in 2000 and have three sons.

Life took Shaun and Melissa on unplanned paths until they returned to education as nontraditional students. In 1998, Melissa earned an associate of applied science degree with an emphasis in computer and business technology from Manhattan Area Technical College.

This degree assisted her in finding her first legal administrative assistant job where she learned a little about alternative dispute resolution. She later returned to school to earn a bachelor of science in family studies and human services, a minor in conflict analysis and trauma studies, and a certificate in conflict resolution, all at Kansas State University while working on campus full time.

Obviously, Melissa knew where she was going by then. Legal, human resources, and family-related fields have been closely tied to Melissa's experience over the past 18 years. She went on to earn a Master of Science in Negotiation and Dispute Resolution from Creighton University's School of Law. Melissa currently works full time at Kansas State University as an office manager in an administrative office and does mediation, arbitration, and conflict resolution consulting online and in person in the evenings.

Once Melissa had completed her degree through Creighton, Shaun was inspired to return to school after more than 25 years working in construction. As a painter and builder he is familiar with the need for dispute resolution in this field. Shaun always wanted to do something more, outside of the family business.

He started taking classes at Kansas State University in January 2011 and is on the fast track toward a Bachelor of Science degree in Family Studies and Human Services, Minor in Conflict Analysis and Trauma Studies, and Certificate in Conflict Resolution (sound familiar?!). He is also considering a second major in criminology. Shaun enjoys being a non-traditional student and looks forward to the opportunities presented to him.

Melissa and Shaun have co-mediated and plan to do more work together in the future. They work well together in and out of the meeting room.

Melissa has worked mostly with military families, which she enjoys as her dad was in the military while she was young. Shaun hopes to focus more on agricultural and construction/real estate mediation.

Current projects include divorce and parenting plan mediation and expanding their practice in the region. They would like to get to know more mediators in the state and collaborate on larger projects when possible.

Article submitted by Melissa Linenberger. She may be reached at Melissa Linenberger <melissalinenberger@gmail.com>

Fall AFCC Training

The program brochure and online registration are now available for the AFCC Regional Training Conference, There's No Place Like Two Homes: The Complexities of Separation, Divorce and Co-Parenting, Nov. 7-9, at the Westin Kansas City at Crown Center in Kansas City, MO. The training conference is formatted to offer intensive three-hour training workshops to sharpen your skills.

The two-home concept has evolved and expanded as parents, lawmakers and professionals have shaped and reshaped the reality of shared parenting after separation within the context of an accelerating pace of change in the economy, culture, customs, shifting norms and information technology.

Isolina Ricci, author of the Mom's House, Dad's House books and founder and director, Custody & Co-Parenting Solutions in San Ramon, California, will share her perspective based on 40-plus years as a clinician, mediator and statewide coordinator of court services. Dr. Ricci will discuss the core challenges professionals, parents and children face today and offer a forecast for the future.

We Want to Know How
You Became Interested
in Conflict Resolution

Send your stories to Janet
at hmaorganization@everestkc.net