

# Dispute Resolution Center Newsletter

## July 2017

### Inside this issue:

NYSdra Executive Director  
Announces Retirement

From the Director

A Century of Caring  
Beyond Belief

Peer Mediation

Capital Region's Youth  
Justice Team Meeting

Restorative Justice/Practices

Save the Date:  
DV Conference

Meet the Staff

### Carter Announces Her Planned Retirement: NYSDRA Board Commences National Executive Director Search



ALBANY, NEW YORK, May 4, 2017 – After she was promoted by the New York State Dispute Resolution Association (NYSdra) Board of Directors five years ago, Charlotte Carter today publicly announced her planned retirement from her role as NYSDRA Executive Director. Carter notified the NYSDRA Board of Directors of her desire to retire in late 2016 to ensure that the Board had enough planning time to commence the search for a new Executive Director, as well as to develop and implement a smooth transition plan in placing a new Executive Director.

"My years with NYSDRA arc over a quarter of a century, and have sustained and challenged me," Carter said. "First as a community volunteer, I was eager for the first-class training NYSDRA hosted in victim/offender, divorce mediation, and consensus-building in environmental and other public controversies. In 2004 I became a program manager for a groundbreaking restorative justice program for victims of clergy sexual abuse; then I moved on to a different groundbreaking initiative with the agricultural mediation program. In 2012 I was invited to become NYSDRA's Executive Director."

"My work in the dispute resolution field has been intensely fulfilling. I am most grateful for the people I've had the

honor to work with in public practice in the statewide network of community mediation centers, private practitioners, advocacy teams, our emerging champions in the Unified Court System; the NYS Legislature, the Governor's Office, the NYSDRA Board, and, most especially, my current and former colleagues here at NYSDRA."

"My post-retirement plans include becoming an active community mediator and NYSDRA member again, incorporating and expanding the mission of my local Food Pantry, more travel (preferably to exotic places with my children), and more gardening, weaving and berry growing. I look forward to seeing many of my friends and colleagues at the NYSDRA Conference this fall in Saratoga."

NYSdra Board of Directors President Ron Vero acknowledged Carter's long-time contribution to NYSDRA. "Speaking on behalf of the entire NYSDRA Board and membership, we are incredibly grateful for the hard work and commitment that Charlotte has contributed to NYSDRA through the years. Charlotte has been a positive force for the dispute resolution community in New York. We look forward to her continued contributions as an active community mediator and NYSDRA member. This will in turn position the organization to best support the success of our next Executive Director."

Vero indicated that the NYSDRA Board of Directors and Search Committee, chaired by Vero, hope to hire a new Executive Director by mid-to-late summer of this year. *(Article copied with permission from NYSDRA.org)*



### From the Program Director

Greetings Mediators!

I hope that this newsletter finds you all safe and healthy. I know when you get this it will be close to July 4<sup>th</sup>. As we celebrate Independence Day in America, let us reflect on all of the things that we have to be thankful for living in this country.

If you watch the news, it is so often presented in the negative. There are many negative things to report on. However, we also have access to many positive things in this country. We have the right to self-determination. That is HUGE! In addition, we are so lucky to be New Yorkers! Our state has deemed self-determination such an important right, they have put funding in place to make sure all people regardless of their socioeconomic status have access to a Community Dispute Resolution Center where they can peacefully present their problems and ideas to people who are highly trained and compassionate neutrals who will help them navigate their problems and ideas toward resolution.

The work that the staff and the volunteers do with our Dispute Resolution Center is quality human service. We help people to move forward in their lives by taking baby steps. The stories that we are privileged to hear and the problems that they trust us to help them to discuss are incredible. The fact that so many people come to us with such a desire to work together for the betterment of families and our communities is a testament to the positive forces that exist in our world. The fact that our government, despite all of the problems, views this as a basic human right is fundamental to what America is and that is not lost on me. I am proud of the program we run and the work that we do. I believe that we have a great team of people. I thank you all for your service as mediators and I hope you have a wonderful July 4<sup>th</sup> celebration.

Christy Houck

## A CENTURY OF CARING BEYOND BELIEF



**Catholic Charities of the  
Diocese of Albany**

**1917 - 2017**

As part of our centennial year, we are bestowing the Centennial Medallion upon 100 individuals and groups for distinctive service to the poor and vulnerable in our Diocese.

Catholic Charities was established by a Special Act of the NYS Legislature in 1917. Our work began with welcoming orphans and assisting families with adoption. Over the years, services expanded from the initial foundation in the Capital District to services in all 14 counties of the Diocese. Throughout these years, individuals and groups have contributed to the mission of Catholic Charities and helped to develop and strengthen our services.

The Centennial Medallion awardees were chosen for their generosity, commitment, and passion in serving those most in need. Medallions will be given out at community events around the Albany Diocese throughout 2017, and we applaud all of the honorees who have helped strengthen our mission over the past 100 years.

The former Dispute Resolution Center Director, Donna Kankiewicz, was one of many honored for their service at a dinner on May 25<sup>th</sup>. Donna started with Catholic Charities in the Childcare department in 1991. After 4 years she started work with the Dispute Resolution Center. In 1996 she became the director of that program and a tireless supporter of peaceful resolutions. Through her leadership the program grew. Peaceful resolution was not just a job for her but a way of life.

(Photo left to right: Bishop Edward B. Scharfenberger, Donna Kankiewicz, Bishop Emeritus Howard J. Hubbard)



<http://www.ccrda.org/information/subpage.cfm?subID=133>

## **Peer Mediation** by Pat Hanson, Mediator, Peer Mediation Educator

“Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me...” as a favorite hymn goes. For many years, Catholic Charities DRC of Chenango, Delaware and Otsego Counties has provided training for middle and high school students in Peer Mediation; they learn how to help classmates resolve conflicts peacefully. As a result, trained peer mediators empower students with self-determination, confidence and the ability to work out their differences in a peaceful setting.

I am a retired middle school teacher and peer mediation coordinator. I trained many middle school students during my teaching career; my colleague and I had a very active peer mediation program at the middle school. Since 2008, I have worked with other DRC staff to train peer mediators in Chenango and Delaware County school districts. I have always been impressed with students’ abilities to listen carefully, reflect back the parties’ statements, and help them strategize their own solutions to conflicts with their classmates.

As the frequency of school violence and bullying increased nationwide, districts looked for programs which would reduce the number of referrals for discipline, in-school or out-of-school suspensions, and expulsions. Peer Mediation was one of the most successful as it empowered students to help themselves and their peers navigate their way through peaceful resolution of their conflicts. It also showed them how to prevent or avoid recurring conflicts in the future. Peer Mediation topics include: verbal/non-verbal messages, barriers to communication, active/passive and reflective listening, maintaining neutrality, considering all sides of an issue, open-ended questioning – all very similar to adult mediation training.

In the training, each student is given a mediator handbook designed specifically for that school district. It includes terminology definitions, 7 mediation steps, a narrative/script for mediators to follow before they become familiar with mediation language, inspirational quotes, guidelines and more. The 7 Peer Mediation steps are: 1. Set up the room, 2. Opening Statement, 3. Listening and Notetaking, 4. Listing the Issues that need to be worked out, 5. Brainstorming Solutions, 6. Choosing Solutions, 7. Writing the Agreement. Depending on the district’s needs and wants, the peer mediation handbook may also include forms for pre-mediation screenings, written agreements, and close-out.

Trainers meet and plan with a district teacher or administrator well in advance of training to discuss and adapt the program to the particular needs of that school. In my opinion, a Peer Mediation program is a very valuable tool for maintaining a peaceful school climate. It is most successful and effective when teachers and administrators support the mediators by using the program to its full advantage.

## **Capital Region’s Youth Justice Team Meeting**

by Diana Halstead, DRC Case Manager

I recently had the opportunity to attend the Capital Region’s Youth Justice Team meeting. The team meets quarterly to discuss topics in Youth Justice. This diverse group includes social workers, probation officers, school counselors, police officers, mediators, and many others working in the field of Youth Justice. The Team is broken down into workgroups that meet on a monthly basis to address smaller components of Youth Justice. These groups include: Trauma, Reintegration, Children of Incarcerated Parents, Restorative Practices, Poverty & Economic Development, Youth, Family, and Community Engagement, and School Justice.

I was fortunate enough to attend not only the quarterly team meeting, but also the *Restorative Practices* workgroup meeting as well. At this meeting we brainstormed ways to implement Restorative Justice Practices into schools, agencies, and other social institutions. We talked about the importance of providing juvenile offenders opportunities to reconcile with their communities and families after committing an offense. We had a discussion about how Restorative Practices such as *Circles* could be the perfect platform to provide such opportunities.

The Juvenile Justice System is currently preparing for “Raise the Age”, which will allow offenders who previously were tried as adults in Criminal Court to now be tried as Juveniles in Family Court. It appears this change in legislature may provide opportunities to implement Restorative Practices as a way to help handle this influx of new cases in Family Court. The group is working hard to make this idea a reality, and it’s exciting to be a part of such a passionate, driven team. I’m looking forward to continuing my involvement with the Capital Region Youth Justice Team, and hope that it will create some new opportunities for Catholic Charities Dispute Resolution Center .

## Restorative Justice/ Practices by Pat Hanson, Mediator

Catholic Charities DRC of Chenango, Delaware and Otsego Counties is currently looking into developing a Restorative Justice/ Practices Program. In the aftermath of a crime or any type of harm or injustice, which may occur in schools, communities, workplaces, prisons, or elsewhere, there are often residual feelings of hurt and resentment in victims. A Restorative Practices facilitator assembles all those involved – the harmed/victim, the offender(s) and other interested parties – and gently directs them in a restorative circle. It is one of several ways in which people who have been harmed can meet face to face with their offender and explain to them what the offense meant to them. It is a very powerful experience.

One restorative circle involved a young man who, after being in jail, was returning to school. Some had concerns about how his transition back to school might be difficult not only for him but also for his classmates and teachers. The facilitator (guidance counselor) organized a restorative circle which included the young man, his parole officer, and administrator, teachers, the boy's mother and father, and others. It was a very emotional and moving process. His parents each spoke about how they supported him, knew he could do it, and told him how much they loved him. The school personnel gave him encouragement, the parole officer and an advocate told him they had seen others succeed and that he could too. By the time the young man spoke, he was crying, overwhelmed with the love and caring expressed for him. He told members of the circle that he knew he could do it with their support.

When meeting in a restorative circle, the facilitator ensures that everyone has the right and opportunity to speak without interruption, to express their feelings and opinions without being criticized, and to hear all sides of the issue. Restorative Practices attempts to answer these questions: 1. What happened and who was harmed? 2. What impact has this incident had on the victims? 3. Whose obligation is it to repair the harm? 4. What can be done to repair the harm and rebuild trust? All of the questions and more are explored through a very carefully organized process known as a restorative circle. All participants sit in a circle, only one speaks at a time, holding the talking piece. Participants know that they will have a chance to speak or pass when it is their turn. Often the offender hears for the first time how their actions affected those harmed.

If you would like to find out more about Restorative Justice/ Practices see: Skidmore College RJ Program (David Karp, Duke Fisher) [www.SkidmoreRJ.org](http://www.SkidmoreRJ.org), and the Center for Restorative Justice: Suffolk University, Boston, MA [www.suffolk.edu](http://www.suffolk.edu)

### Chasing Dinosaurs by Bruce Edwards (May 2017) (Article summary by Melissa Capone)

It seems that in some places, there is a demise of the use of joint sessions in mediation – where the parties involved in conflict meet together to try and resolve their differences. In his May 2017 article on Mediate.com, Bruce Edwards, an attorney and professional mediator for over 30 years, discusses the difficulties mediation had in its beginning stages, to get people on-board. He talks about how he preferred to stay focused on open-minded individuals instead of “chasing dinosaurs”, meaning people who would rather continue doing things the same way and not being interested in trying new approaches.

One main focus of his article is how the approach to mediation seems to have shifted in some areas from using joint sessions to doing away with them and how he is alarmed by that trend. He mainly uses Commercial Mediation as his model, where he admits that most disputes involve parties who will most likely never have any future relationships, but that he still believes having both parties meet face-to-face is the best way to help them resolve their differences. Stating that it's essentially impossible to separate emotions from rational thought, and by the mediators helping to guide the parties “through these sometimes difficult moments of confrontation and disagreement”, disputes can be resolved, relationships can be healed and sometimes an apology can even be heard. But, this isn't seen as often when the parties aren't face-to-face, so that mediators should appreciate that a “joint session, properly managed, is not just a good idea but also an essential first step toward meeting the needs of the parties.” To read the article, go to:

<https://www.mediate.com/articles/EdwardsB1.cfm>.





## Save the Date!

### • July 14, 2017: **“Domestic Violence and Other Issues Impacting Families Today”**

Conference, Location: Cobleskill-Richmondville High School, 1353 NY-7, Richmondville; Registration and Exhibitor Fair- 8:00 AM; Conference begins at 9:00 AM– For more information, please contact Angela Smith, Program Director, Catholic Charities Domestic Violence and Crime Victims Programs of Schoharie County, at (518) 234-3581, or by e-mail: [angelas@catholiccharitiessc.org](mailto:angelas@catholiccharitiessc.org)



Everyone is invited to write articles that would be of interest to mediators. If you have something you would like to share for the newsletter, please email your article by Friday, July 21st to April Rando at [arando@charitiesccdo.org](mailto:arando@charitiesccdo.org). Thank you!

# Domestic Violence And Other Issues Impacting Families Today



July 14, 2017  
Cobleskill –Richmondville High School  
1353 NY-7, Richmondville



**8:00 am** Registration and Exhibitor Fair opens

**9:00am** - Opening remarks

“Promoting Resilience in Children Exposed to Abuse and Dealing with the Batterer as Parent in Court Proceedings” presented by Lorien Castelle, New York State Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NYSCADV)

“ Keeping our Children Safe Online” presented by David DeCelle, Missing and Exploited Children

**12:00pm** Lunch

**1pm – 2pm** Breakout Session I

**2:15pm - 3:15pm** Breakout Session II

Each Topic (A,B,C below) will be offered at each Breakout Session, attendees will rank courses in order of preference for each session and every attempt will be made to assign attendees to their first two choices.

- A) “The Intersections of Domestic Violence and Mental Illness”, Bonnie Allen, New York State Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence
- B) “Kids Have the Power to Heal; An Overview of How to Help Children Affected by Chemical Dependency Become Well”, Noreen Hodges, Schoharie County Council on Alcohol and Substance Abuse (SCCASA)
- C) “Moving from *What’s Wrong With You?* to *What has Happened to You?*”, Siri Young, LCSW, Schoharie County ACES Team

Register today at: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/3V5JPR8>

\$10 Registration fee includes buffet lunch from Justine’s of Cobleskill

**Presented by:**

The Child At Risk Response Team (CARRT) Domestic Violence Task Force



*Each month we will feature articles about staff and volunteer mediators.*



**John Graham, DRC Case Manager:**

Hello my name is John Graham. I have been a mediator for around 7 years. I am currently the Case Manager for the Divorce Mediation Program, which is available in the seven counties we serve. I have been trained to do youth and parent mediation, lemon law mediation, divorce mediation, special education mediation, workplace mediation, and

some others as well. When I'm not working I enjoy bicycling, walking my dogs, and eating eggs from my chickens.



**MaryAnn Dignazio Louis, Volunteer Mediator**

Dr. Seuss (one of my favorite authors) starts an introduction to Sam as "Sam I am". So let me borrow from

his style...MaryAnn I am!

I have been a trained volunteer mediator since 2002, one year after I began my work as a prevention educator with Catholic Charities of what was then, just Montgomery County (until the later merger with Fulton County).

Being a mediator caught my attention because of its purpose- to enable others to think through their own decisions through, what Pope Francis encourages as "dialogue and encounter". As a lay associate of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet for 32 years, I have been formed in their mission of unity and reconciliation. Mediation, for me, helps to bring that to the everyday lives of people in a process that has the ability to empower others to realize their own potential and find a hopeful outcome. It allows

dialogue and encounter to happen. For me, it is a privileged and humbling experience. It's like one of my favorite television commercials of the past when a young boy who is outside is called into the house for supper and the words came on the screen to "come to the table." Mediation is an invitation to come to the table and set it with the burdens, struggles, and personal thoughts of life. Mediators become that safe space that can let it happen.

The curriculums that I teach always have components that have to do with effective communication skills and conflict resolution. Through my reading, I have discovered wisdom from so many people. One of my favorites is St. Benedict who exhorted in his rules for Benedictine communities the art of listening with the ear of the heart. Mediation certainly encompasses that attitude which is part of my own inner prayer as I step into a mediation setting be it child custody, child visitation or parent/teen issue. May I listen with the ear of my heart and if needed give a word that will rouse them.

Of course, the "all work and no play" philosophy that I learned a long while ago certainly made an impression on me. So in my leisure, I like to read (you may have guessed that already), write (articles, my thoughts, just getting into my own blog), create (collages, cards), walk, and be with my family (which includes my precious black cat, Diamond), friends, and yes, even myself, for some alone time!

...and that's me: "I am MaryAnn. MaryAnn I am."

**WANTED: VOLUNTEERS!**

Do you know someone who might be interested in becoming a volunteer mediator or a volunteer translator? Please contact Christy Houck, DRC Program Director at [chouck@charitiesccdo.org](mailto:chouck@charitiesccdo.org)