

Notes from the Carriage House Summer 2008 Newsletter

Community Mediation Center of Rhode Island

THE DIRECTOR'S CORNER

In our last newsletter I made a plea for supporters to consider assisting the Mediation Center in a variety of ways, which included the idea of hosting a private cocktail party fundraiser to benefit CMCRI. Coincidentally, within days of the issuance of that newsletter, we received a call from Eileen Benghiat, the daughter of Joan Gelch – one of the Center's founding members – letting us know she was hosting a surprise birthday party for her mother and requesting that contributions be made to CMCRI in lieu of gifts.

Originally named the Providence Community Mediation Center, CMCRI was founded in 1996 as a grass-roots community mediation center by a group of individuals committed to bringing peaceful conflict resolution to Rhode Island. Joan was among those visionaries, and in the ensuing 12 years she has served as Board member, volunteer mediator, fundraising committee member, Advisory Board member, community ambassador

and stalwart donor. To recognize her longstanding commitment to the agency, in 2005 CMCRI presented Joan with the Chief Justice Frank J. Williams Award for Excellence in Promoting Mediation and Peaceful Conflict Resolution. Fittingly, Joan reports that her interest in mediation was sparked through her daughter Eileen, who is also a mediator whose accomplishments include mediating disputes for the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination and serving on the Board of Metropolitan Mediation Services in Brookline, Massachusetts.

Due in no small part to Joan's commitment, the Center has grown into a thriving conflict resolution agency with a major presence in the state. We are so grateful that Joan's daughter, in the same vein of generosity exhibited by her mother, requested that Joan's friends and family honor her through a contribution to CMCRI. It is this type of creative giving that will help sustain the Community Mediation Center

through a time of budget cuts and increasing fiscal uncertainty at the state level. Happy 70th Birthday wishes to Joan Gelch, and a big thank you to her daughter Eileen and her friends and family members who honored her through their donations!

I would also like to welcome Holly Hitchcock, the latest addition to CMCRI's Board of Directors. Holly has a Masters Degree in Education and Counseling, directs the legal education programs for the Rhode Island Supreme Court, is an experienced mediator with a private mediation practice, and is past president of the Rhode Island Council of Family Mediators. She has proven herself to be a wonderful and enthusiastic addition to our Board, and we look forward to continuing to work with Holly in the years to come.

Happy summer, everyone!

Abbie Jones-Herriott,
Director

Inside this issue:

<i>Director's Corner</i>	1
<i>CMCRI Calendar</i>	2
<i>Providence Tomorrow Waterfront Charrettes</i>	2
<i>Reflective Practice Workshop</i>	3
<i>Juvenile Restorative Justice Project</i>	3
<i>In Other Center News</i>	4
<i>Wish List</i>	4

CMCRI CALENDAR

Upcoming Events, Meetings & Workshops

■ **The 2008 Bi-Monthly Mediators Meetings** will continue to take place on the last Tuesday of alternating months. By popular vote our mediators have asked that the meeting time be changed from a breakfast slot (8:00 – 9:30 AM) to an afternoon slot (4:30 – 6:00 PM.) The 2008 Meeting dates are:

■ **Tuesday, July 29th, 4 – 6 PM** *(please note that this meeting starts one half hour earlier than usual!)* - The Rhode Island Commission on Human Rights will present on the types of discrimination cases that come before the Commission, how the Commission works, and how CMCRI collaborates with the Commission to help resolve these cases through mediation. All mediators wishing to work on human rights cases must undergo this workshop at least once.

This workshop will take place in CMCRI's offices; space may be limited so if you are interested in attending please contact Victoria Moreno-Jackson.

■ **Tuesday, September 30th, 4:30 – 6:30 PM** - Ed Albanese from the Department of Children, Youth, and Families' Office of Child Protective Services will be presenting on reporting suspected unreported child abuse, focusing on "Do's and Don'ts" if a mediator suspects unreported child abuse. He will also discuss what process is set into motion when CPS receives a call regarding suspected child abuse. Following his presentation, CMCRI staff will disseminate CMCRI's Safety/Reporting Plan, review the Center's confidentiality policy, and lead a discussion around confidentiality and reporting issues in mediation. This workshop will take place in CMCRI's offices. An e-mail reminder will go out to mediators in August.

■ **Tuesday, November 25th** - Topic TBD

CMCRI provides snacks and beverages at these meetings. E-mail reminders will go out beforehand announcing agendas and topics to be discussed. As always,

please let us know if there are topics you would like to see discussed or areas you would like to learn more about during these meetings.

■ **October 16, 2008** - SAVE THE DATE for Conflict Resolution Day - Both of last year's Non-Violent Communication workshops held in honor of Conflict resolution Day - the 2 hour workshop for the general public and the day-long advanced training the following day - were a great success. Please stay tuned in late Summer/early Fall for an announcement about our 2008 event!

■ **October/November 2008** - CMCRI's 34 Hour Basic Mediation Skills Training - If you or someone you know is interested in becoming trained as a mediator, please contact our office to get on our wait list for the training. This training will begin the week of October 27th and conclude by mid-November. We will send out an email to our wait list when the class is scheduled.

CMCRI Volunteers Assist with Facilitating Providence

Tomorrow Waterfront Charrettes

This past June, the Cambridge, Massachusetts-based Consensus Building Institute (CBI) contacted CMCRI for assistance with facilitating a series of discussions on the future of Providence's waterfront. The City of Providence had hired CBI to run a week-long workshop open to the public and designed to elicit public opinion on such potentially controversial issues as economic development, job opportunities, and aesthetic and recreational concerns relating to the City's wa-

terfront. The Consensus Building Institute in turn asked CMCRI for volunteers to facilitate a series of break-out discussions in which participants would be asked to evaluate a specific proposed development scenario for the waterfront. Many of the proposed scenarios were controversial, and many participants represented specific interest groups focused on advocating specific outcomes. In addition to keeping the conversation on track and productive, the task of the facilitators was to

assist participants in articulating their underlying interests and to ensure that everyone present had an equal opportunity to share in the discussion. Director Abbie Jones-Herriott was joined by mediators Patricia Taubin, Bruce Kogan, Oliver Chappell, and Olivia Milonas, all of whom answered the call to act as facilitators. Special thanks go out to those volunteers who gave their time to participate in this engaging and important conversation about the future of Providence's waterfront.

CMCRI Hosts Reflective Practice Workshop

On Tuesday, May 27th, CMCRI hosted a workshop at Casey Family Services in Providence, titled [How to Utilize Reflection in Your Mediation Practice](#). This workshop was led by former CMCRI trainer and volunteer Ruthy Kohorn Rosenberg, now the Student Mediation Coordinator at MIT in Cambridge, MA. Ruthy began the workshop discussing the history behind reflective practice and how reflective practice can be used as a tool, by mediators of varying skill and experience levels, for improving

practice. Participants in the workshop participated in fish-bowl style role plays where participants traded off acting as mediators and worked with the entire group on identifying “critical moments” (moments where choices the mediators made significantly impacted the mediation) during the process and what lessons could be learned from those critical moments. The role-play mediators then worked with the group on how to identify critical moments in real-life mediations for the purpose of evaluating and learn-

ing from these critical moments, whether mediating alone or with a fellow co-mediator. Feedback from this workshop was overwhelmingly positive, and participants expressed a strong interest in seeing more skill-building based workshops. CMCRI is looking forward to continuing to offer both information based trainings and skill-building workshops. If there are any particular topics which you would like to see CMCRI address, please contact us and let us know!

Juvenile Restorative Justice Project Gets off the Ground

In early May more than a dozen CMCRI volunteers, staff and interested community members were trained in Victim/Offender Mediation by trainer and seasoned mediator Barb Nimmer of LaCrosse, Wisconsin. Barb has over twenty years experience in the mediation field and currently runs the LaCrosse YWCA's Mediation and Restorative Services Program which provides victim offender conferencing for juveniles and adults. A VOMA (Victim Offender Mediation Association) certified trainer as well as the President of the Wisconsin Restorative Justice Coalition, Barb has been a tremendous resource in getting CMCRI's pilot project off the ground, providing us with her perspective and experience, sample forms and ongoing practical advice. This three-day intensive training, covering the origins and principles of Restorative Justice, the nuts and bolts of the process, role plays, and examples of different programs, was the final step in launching the Center's pilot project in Juvenile Restorative Justice, generously funded by a grant from the Rhode

Island Foundation. The response from participants was overwhelmingly positive and the Center hopes to continue to offer this training on a bi-annual basis.

CMCRI followed this training up in late June with a workshop featuring Tanya Nelson, also of Wisconsin. Tanya became a fierce advocate of Restorative Justice after having participated in victim/offender mediation as a survivor of a violent armed robbery. In addition to her “daytime” job with a local television station, she currently volunteers in correctional facilities, speaking to incarcerated offenders from a victim's perspective and providing representation as a community member. Tanya connected with the Center after responding to a query CMCRI placed on the NAFCM (National Association for Community Mediation) list-serv. In responding, Tanya was immediately willing to offer any information or perspective she could provide that would help CMCRI in getting the project up and running. On June 26, 2008, Tanya generously took a day away from a family visit in Massa-



Tanya Nelson

chusetts to travel to Providence and share her experience and perspective at a workshop attended by CMCRI's volunteer mediators and staff. Speaking eloquently about her journey from traumatized victim to empowered participant in a mediation in which she confronted one of the youth who robbed her, Tanya touched upon the shortcomings of the court process from a victim perspective, as well as the power of speaking face-to-face with someone who had caused her great harm. Tanya's perspective was an invaluable one to hear, particularly for those who will be mediating victim/offender cases, and CMCRI is indebted to her for so candidly sharing her experience.

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In Other Center News

In the wake of the Central Falls shootings earlier this summer, CMCRI staff made a presentation, provided a demonstration, and led role plays on the benefits of peer mediation at the Central Falls Youth Summit held at the URI Shephard Building on June 2nd . . . CMCRI and The Massachusetts Office of Dispute Resolution (MODR) provided a joint training on Agricultural Mediation Issues at White's of Westport on June 4th . . . CMCRI staff helped coach final role plays for a Basic Mediation Skills Training at MIT . . . CMCRI staff represented Rhode Island's Agricultural Mediation Program at the annual Coalition of Agricultural Mediation Programs in Milwaukee, WI . . . Restorative Justice Program Associate Pamela Humphreys continues to attend the weekly Police Chief

meetings with the Providence Police Department and recently made a presentation to this group about CMCRI's Juvenile Restorative Justice Project . . . Two CMCRI staff members participated in the 2 ½ day "Undoing Racism" workshop led by trainers from The People's Institute For Survival and Beyond and hosted by Making Connections Providence . . . CMCRI staff attended the New England Police Summit and introduced the question to attendees of how community restorative justice programs can fit into and assist police departments . . . And on June 16th CMCRI hosted its annual Volunteer Appreciation Event for Board members and active volunteer mediators at L'Attitude Modern Eatery on Broad Street in Pawtuxet Village.



Scenes from CMCRI's Volunteer Appreciation Event

Wish List

As many of you know, both the EastSide Marketplace in Providence and Shaw's and Star Market donate 1% of your saved receipts back to the Community Mediation Center. Our goal is to generate at least \$2000 of revenue annually through this program. Saving your Eastside Marketplace, Shaw's and Star Market receipts is a painless way in which you can help CMCRI. Please consider asking friends, neighbors, family and co-workers to save and pass on their receipts to you! We thank in particular the employees at Aptima, Inc. in Woburn, MA, who have been fantastic about saving receipts, and Cullen Jackson, who has taken it upon himself to spearhead the collection efforts.

CMCRI STAFF

Abigail Jones-Herriott, Executive Director

Victoria Moreno-Jackson, Program Director

Elmis Navarro, Program Associate

Pamela Humphreys, Program Associate

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