On Friday, October 21, 2011, the investiture of The Honorable Cleo Elaine Powell took place in the crowded courtroom of the Supreme Court of Virginia, where at age 54 she was sworn in as the newest justice to serve on the Commonwealth’s Supreme Court.

In his remarks on that very significant day, Governor Robert McDonnell noted that the great filmmaker, Steven Spielberg, was filming the story of Abraham Lincoln in Virginia's capitol building designed by Thomas Jefferson on the historic day of the investiture of Virginia's first female African American Justice, Cleo Powell. He referred to her as a great Virginian and one of only a few to serve on every level of court in the Commonwealth.

Justice Powell enjoyed a country girl upbringing in Brunswick County, receiving her undergrad degree from UVA in 1979 in American Government and her law degree from the UVA School of Law in 1982.

Justice Powell offered her thoughts in response to questions posed to her, as follows:

**As a youngster growing up in Brunswick County, what did you dream of being? How did you become interested in studying law?**

I dreamed of being a servant of the law. I aspired to ferret out injustice and through carefully honed legal skills to eradicate it. I, along with about four of my 8th grade classmates, went to see a lawyer to discuss the possibility of encouraging the school board to allow African American Literature and History to be taught at our school. The lawyer was Sam Tucker, a civil rights icon. He was confident, kind and interested in us, his potential clients. All the things a counselor should be. I wanted to be just like him.
What did your grandparents and parents teach you that has stood the test of time in your own life?

So many things: accountability, responsibility, love of self and others, empathy, respect and faith.

You left a legal career in the prestigious law firm of Hunton & Williams to be employed for three years by the Commonwealth as Senior Assistant Attorney General. How would you describe that transition from private practice to public servant?

Each step of the journey has prepared me for the next. As a junior associate at Hunton & Williams, I learned from some of the best how to assemble a case from discovery to the trial notebook. At the Attorney General’s Office, I used that knowledge to experience the thrill of being a trial lawyer and trying my own cases. The transition was natural, and the lessons I learned at Hunton & Williams equipped me well for the fast-paced trial work of the Attorney General’s office.

Leaving the public sector in 1989 to work as corporate counsel and Director of Employee Services for Virginia Power moved you into yet another realm of legal practice. What do you feel you learned from your years there that prepared you for your next career move to the bench in the Virginia Judicial System?

At Virginia Power, I learned a new level of humility. At the Attorney General’s office, I was at my best in the courtroom. As much as I loved litigation, my courtroom skills did not translate as well into the arbitration arena when I counted my win/loss record. At Virginia Power, I discovered and developed another skill set: negotiation and boardroom skills. Again, it was each opportunity building on the last. My final lesson at Virginia Power was that the law is my first and true love. Just before leaving Virginia Power, I had moved from a legal position into a management position. Then the bench called, and I am forever grateful that it did.

In 1993, when Virginia Senator Henry L. Marsh supported you for a vacancy on the Chesterfield General District Court, you became the first woman and African American to serve on the County’s General District Court bench. Did it ever occur to you as you made history at this level, that you would move on in 2000 to serve a Circuit Court judgeship in the County and then just eight years later be distinguished as the first African American woman to be appointed to the Virginia Court of Appeals?

No. During my last few months at Virginia Power, I had decided to leave the legal arena and follow my new found skill set, labor negotiations and boardroom success. I had never, in my wildest dreams, thought of being a judge. However, I believe that I was “called” to the bench. At the time I moved to General District Court, I did not anticipate what would come next. I marvel at how my path has unfolded, like the petals of a flower, at each new opportunity.

What have you enjoyed about your role as a judge? Does the constant stream of disputes ever tend to wear you down personally?

Every now and then, I get a glimpse of how something I did, a decision I made or didn’t make, made a positive difference in someone’s life. A young girl with no direction, came back years later to introduce me to her infant child; a drug addicted woman came back to share with me that she had been called to preach; a pro se litigant wanted me to know she had established an outreach for other pro se litigants; a recovering addict sought me out to say the $11,000 he had to pay to his
ex-wife was money well spent because through the turmoil he got his life together; a lawyer keeps me updated on her former clients to tell me "the kids are alright." The few times I know that I made a positive difference made it all worthwhile.

People hurt and they need to know that the legal system works. It is often painful to watch/hear man's inhumanity to man, but it's what I signed on for. So I try to find the right answer, pray that it works and try to move on. There are some tragedies that I still remember, but I try not to dwell on them.

You faithfully served on the ADR Advisory Council from 1999 through 2006, playing a key role in the development and growth of mediation in Virginia's courts. How did you come to believe in the value of offering alternatives to adjudication, such as mediation, in the resolution of disputes before the court?

A large number of the people who come into court are hurting and the decisive win/lose, lose/lose of the judicial decision making doesn't always work. While not every case is appropriate for mediation, for those that are, the litigants receive much more satisfaction if they can resolve their situations on their own terms. Other times, when people just need to know that they have been heard, mediation is more conducive to this need than litigation. It is vital that the system be viewed as fair in order for it to work. Sometimes mediation is the preferred route to "fairness."

From November 2006 through November 2008, you served as a member of the Complaint Panel, reviewing grievances brought against Virginia certified mediators. How did your judicial experience aid you in carrying out these duties?

As judges, we learn to listen to both sides and attempt to discern where the truth lies. The ability to do this helps in any type of conflict resolution. Also, as judges, we learn that often people just want to be heard, another skill that helped as a member of the Complaint Panel.

What a challenge to fill the Supreme Court of Virginia vacancy created by the passing of your mentor and friend, former Chief Justice Leroy Hassell, the first African American to serve in that capacity. What do you imagine he would have said were he present at your investiture as the first black woman to serve on this distinguished court?

It is a challenge, but better than that, it is an honor and a privilege. As I said at my investiture, I hope and truly believe that he would be proud. As to what he would say, I suspect he would remind me to stay grounded in my faith, to remain true to myself, to honor my calling, to do justice and show mercy and to always remember whose I am and who I am. I think he would tell me to live a life that recognizes the importance of faith, justice, honor and family.

Several of the speakers at your investiture remarked that it is not your gender or your ethnicity that elevated you to this seat on the Supreme Court, but your intelligence and exemplary character. Who would you say are the key people who have influenced your passion for achievement and excellence in everything you do?

I have learned so much from so many. I believe that we learn something from everyone we encounter. Rather than names, it's best to identify categories. As a child, it was my parents, aunts, uncles and teachers. As a lawyer, it has been other lawyers and judges, but mostly litigants. In general, my children, both birth and honorary adoptees, inspire me to excellence.
Your cousin, Rev. Grady Wilson Powell, Jr., told a family story to the investiture audience about how your great-grandfather Jim Powell was freed from slavery at age twelve, later married your great-grandmother Kizzie, and together they bore eleven children, including your grandfather, Millas Powell. Quoting a philosopher, Rev. Powell said, "Life can be understood by looking backwards, but can only be lived by looking forward." Describe your feelings about how far you have come from those family roots to have achieved what you have today?

Deeply humbled that I would be entrusted with such an awesome responsibility.

Governor Bob McDonnell mentioned at your investiture that you serve on the Board of the Central Food Bank and commended you for being a "great woman of faith." Mayor Dwight Jones spoke of you as being the consummate working woman for whom family comes first and told of your involvement in your church, mentoring teens, leading children's church programs, and leading the Caritas program for the homeless. He compared you to Deborah in the Bible, "a woman and judge of great wisdom." How has your faith formed your personal values and motivated you to serve others in tandem with a busy career and raising three children with your husband?

They were all very kind in their comments! Faith is the foundation of my life. Our parents taught us as children to love our neighbor as ourselves, to do unto others as we would have them do unto us and to know that there, but for the grace of God, it could be us. My faith teaches me that the best leader is a servant leader. With those life lessons, I cannot focus exclusively on my family/children when other children are in need. I have to do what I can, while I can.

How has your husband of twenty-six years, Alvin Larnell Dilworth, contributed to who you are today? What are your hopes and dreams for your children, Vaughan, Harrison and Taylor?

My husband knows me better than anyone else. He knows my strengths and my weaknesses. He encourages me, supports me, points out the "error of my ways" and keeps me grounded. He is that helpmate that everyone needs, one who will call it as he sees it, but still provide unconditional love.

For my children, I pray that they will always remember who they are and whose they are and live their lives accordingly.

You have been recognized as a leader and outstanding citizen by Ebony magazine, "Outstanding Women of Virginia," the Metro Richmond Women's Bar Association, Lawyer's Weekly "Influential Women of Virginia," and the Virginia Women Attorney's Association. As a role model for young people, what's your best piece of advice?

Be the best "you" that you can be. Always do what you know to be right and demand the same from others.

What does the future hold for you?

I don't know, but I am open to the possibilities!
Glenda Carter, Justice Powell's judicial assistant, shared her viewpoint regarding what makes Justice Powell a person whose life is an inspiration to others.

I began working with Justice Powell in 1993 when she was appointed as a judge for the General District Court of the 12th judicial circuit and I was a deputy clerk in Chesterfield. She was then appointed to the Circuit Court for the 12th judicial circuit in 2000 and to the Virginia Court of Appeals in 2008. With both of these moves, I was pleased and honored to be asked to accompany her. In 2011, Justice Powell was elevated to the Supreme Court of Virginia, where she currently serves, and I am her judicial assistant. We have worked with one another for the past nineteen years.

In terms of Justice Powell’s professional qualities, the one that stands out most clearly to me is her ability to listen patiently and intently to others who come before her and to treat all parties with dignity, respect and equality. Although I have been made aware that certain individuals disagree with the decisions Justice Powell has made in some cases, I have never heard anyone say that she did not give them the opportunity to make their position known to her or that they were treated with anything but courtesy and respect. Additionally, before making a ruling in a case, Justice Powell makes certain that she clearly understands all the facts presented to her before applying those facts to the law and announcing her judgment. It is not at all unusual for Justice Powell to personally question litigants about their testimony so that she is certain as to what it is they have said.

I am reminded of a case many years ago when Justice Powell had just arrived as the judge on the General District Court bench and was hearing a misdemeanor charge of assault and battery involving two young women. The case came before her late on a Friday afternoon and after a particularly heavy docket. When the two young women and their witnesses completed their testimony, it was approximately 5:00 P.M. and she had questions about the veracity of one of the witnesses. Rather than make a quick and uninformed decision in the case, Justice Powell recessed court and asked the sheriff to drive her to the apartment complex where the incident occurred so that she could personally observe the scene the witness had described. Returning from the site at 7:00 P.M., Justice Powell reconvened court and issued her ruling. It has been her practice ever since to ensure she has all the information she needs before making a ruling in a case.

Further, and it goes without saying, Justice Powell possesses a keen intellect which allows her to quickly identify the issues before her so the law may be applied to those matters and an appropriate
judicial decision rendered. Justice Powell has demonstrated the same skills throughout the course of her career, and it has earned her a reputation for civility, thoroughness and equity, as well as the trust and respect of her fellow jurists.

With regard to the personal attributes I most admire in Justice Powell, I must say that despite her superb skills as a jurist, she is even more accomplished as a parent to her children. It was with both pride and humility that Justice Powell announced her eldest child, Vaughan, received a full scholarship to college and recently graduated first in his class. Her second child, Harrison, also received a scholarship to college in Alabama and is a dean's list student. Her daughter, Taylor, not only excels academically but is a talented dancer as well. I have often threatened to bring my children to Justice Powell's home with suitcase in hand, ring the doorbell and run, so they might be exposed to her guidance and skills as a parent. When advised of these plans, Justice Powell simply said, "Bring those babies to me."

I would also like to add my personal admiration for my "friend" Cleo, for the beautiful relationship she shares with her wonderful husband, Alvin, to whom she has referred many times as the love of her life! Her husband is one of those truly rare jewels. Their commitment to each other and to God is amazing. The respect, love and kindness they share together are a gift for God.

I believe the most important personal attribute Justice Powell possesses is her unwavering faith in God and in the belief that He wishes her to serve Him by being of service to others. Justice Powell most clearly evidences this belief not only in her judicial career but also in her personal life, where she serves as a mentor through her church to adolescents who need structure, guidance and support in their lives. It has always been astonishing to me that, despite the enormous demands on her time, Justice Powell somehow finds the time to actually put her faith into practice by being of service to those in need.

Justice Powell’s Family  (Governor’s Photographer: Michaele White)
Left to Right: Daughter Taylor Powell Dilworth, Justice Cleo Elaine Powell, Husband Alvin Larnell Dilworth, and Sons Harrison Powell Dilworth and Vaughan Thomas Dilworth.

You may wish to view a complete slide show of the Investiture.
A philosopher once said that the quality of a person may be measured by how she treats those who can do nothing for her. I have always known Justice Powell to treat everyone who comes into contact with her with both dignity and respect despite their station in life. For this and innumerable other reasons, she is admired and loved, which are the true measures of success. Every day I feel proud, honored and privileged to work for and be with Justice Powell.

At her investiture, Justice Powell was administered the oath of office by Chief Justice Cynthia D. Kinser, as she placed her left hand on the Bible of her late father, Millas Powell, Jr. Her three children served as her robing committee, and three senior justices accompanied her to take her place with the other justices on the bench. She began her address with a smile and a sparkle in her eye, “I’ll try not to keep you too long but if I do, deal with it!” She went on to remark, “I recognize and I know this is not about me. It’s never been about me. It’s about the thousands of people who have worked diligently and given their lives that these opportunities will be available.” To the other justices, and amid chuckles, Justice Powell quipped, “To my colleagues, you have been more than generous in sharing your work . . . my cup and my saucer overflow.”

Her remarks highlighted her family, noting the tremendous influence her parents, Millas and Mary Powell, have had on her life, thanking her sons for becoming fine young men and her daughter a wonderful young woman. She said, “I love you guys and you know just how much . . . better than chocolate!” She described her husband of twenty-six years as her greatest supporter and “my grounding spirit.” Addressing Alvin, she said, “I’d rather be beside you in a storm than safe and warm alone.”

In closing, she quoted the prophet Micah, “And what does the Lord require of you? To do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with your God.” “I covenant to do my best to be the best justice I can be.”

Justice Cleo Powell, Virginia’s ADR Community Salutes You. Yours is Truly a Life That Inspires!
Farewell and Thank You to the Virginia Conflict Resolution Center

It is with sadness that the Virginia mediation community bids farewell to the Virginia Conflict Resolution Center in Norfolk as it closed its doors on March 31, 2012. A not-for-profit community mediation center since 1990, the Center was formerly known as the Dispute Settlement Center, the DSC Community Mediation Center and later the Community Mediation Center of Southeastern Virginia.

The following is a summary of the Center's history and contributions, submitted by Walter T. Camp, Treasurer of the Board of Directors for VCRC.

Envisioning that all communities should be empowered to resolve conflict and to build relationships, the Virginia Conflict Resolution Center’s mission was to educate and to provide conflict resolution services to families, youth, individuals and the community.

For over 20 years, the VCRC raised community awareness of mediation and provided superior family and general court-referred and private mediation services. We offered conflict resolution training and programs in a variety of community settings, including schools, shelters, religious organizations and governmental agencies. In recent years, the Center expanded its community outreach and youth programs, most notably in offering parenting classes and in developing peer mediation, conflict resolution, anti-bullying and anger management programs for high schools and colleges.

VCRC was a recipient of access & visitation grant funds, specifically supporting our work for military and low-income populations. The Center held government contracts at the federal, state, and local levels. We have been told that the VCRC had a presence in more courts, and annually resolved more court-referred cases, than any other provider in the Commonwealth. VCRC was the designated provider of mediation and arbitration services for the Better Business Bureau, and through partnerships with trade associations, the standard auto sales and residential real estate contracts in our region provided for dispute resolution by VCRC.
The Center offered a broad array of core training programs, mentoring and CME courses for those seeking certification and recertification. Trainees and mediators from all over our area and the Commonwealth traveled to the VCRC to participate in our programs, consistently remarking on the exceptional nature of our trainers and training materials.

We are proud to have been a United Way affiliated agency, to have been named United Way Agency of the Year two times in our history, and that our staff and volunteers enthusiastically supported the United Way’s campaign and programs. In fact, we were the only non-profit agency to participate in our local Dancing with Our Stars, having talented dancers among our staff.

The Center, its staff and volunteers were also instrumental in contributing to the profession of mediation in the Commonwealth. The Center was a founding member of VACCR (the Virginia Association for Community Conflict Resolution); it regularly sent representatives to VMN, ACR, TMN, and gatherings of predecessor organizations; and through the close relationship enjoyed with the Executive Secretary’s office, VCRC made practical contributions to numerous Supreme Court procedures and initiatives for court-annexed programs.

Over the past several years, changes in court assignments, decreased numbers of private cases, increased competition from outside mediators, a decrease of mediator training needs, and a smaller volunteer mediator pool contributed to an unsustainable financial model. When we started, mediation was a new field; now, the Supreme Court informs us that there are over 600 currently certified mediators in Virginia, about a quarter of whom are in the Hampton Roads region.

In terms of the future, we have successfully transferred our low-income and military family mediation services and our youth and community programs, along with staff, to The UP Center, a local non-profit human services organization whose mission includes protecting children and strengthening families. In addition, one of our staff members has joined the Better Business Bureau, our long-time supporter, as a member of their dispute resolution team. Yet another staff member will continue to provide mediation services for several local courts, and has taken this opportunity to open his own mediation firm.

Further, we have transferred the Center’s courses and all related training materials to our well-respected and dedicated trainers, to enable them to continue offering exemplary training opportunities to the community. We have often said that the VCRC’s trainers are responsible for training a generation of mediators in Hampton Roads.

Finally, many of our volunteers, including members of our Board of Directors, have indicated their intention to continue general and family mediations in the courts and with The UP Center, and to participate in mediations and arbitrations with the Better Business Bureau.

Once the Board of Directors determined that the organization could not continue, we had just one goal in mind, to continue the Center’s mission. We believe that by securing new homes for our programs and staff, allowing our trainers to continue offering high quality educational opportunities, and ensuring volunteer mediation opportunities, we have succeeded. Those who contributed so much to the VCRC will continue to educate and to provide conflict resolution services throughout our community. Of course, we attribute our success through the years and enabling our mission to continue, to the unparalleled commitment, energy, and professionalism of our staff and volunteers. We thank them for their immeasurable contributions. Collectively, they have enriched our community, by building the capacity for peace.
[DRS asked Walter Camp to share with its readers his personal ties to the Center.]

In the winter of 1997, so much snow fell at my house in Cleveland, Ohio, that the entire mailbox was buried. Returning home from work at night and having to dig my way back into the driveway convinced me it was time to move. I’d enjoyed my 15 years near Lake Erie, except for the winters. After doing research on Eastern cities near water in warmer climes, I eventually chose Hampton Roads as the place where I would start the next phase of my life.

So I informed my employer of 10 years, sold my home, packed my truck with a few essentials and headed to Virginia. I set up a temporary office/residence in an extended stay hotel and commenced studies for the Virginia Bar Exam. Because my closest relative or friend was 200 miles north, in the D.C. metro area, and I was eager to learn about my new home city, I began actively volunteering. In a few months, I was taking General Mediation Certification training at The Dispute Settlement Center in Norfolk. The training offered by Judy Rubin and Karen Richards was truly transformative for me. They taught me how to be an effective listener, as well as so much more.

With my GDC certification in hand, I began frequently mediating at court as a Center volunteer. The Center’s circle of supporters were the people I got to know most closely in my new city, in effect my Hampton Roads family. Ultimately one relationship formed through the Center led to a terrific next step in my career, and many others have been the basis for friendships spanning more than a decade. After gaining CCC certification and beginning to take on private cases, my practice formed a useful and satisfying complement to the other aspects of my work.

Over the years, I continued my service to the Center as an at-court volunteer, a mentor, an occasional trainer, and eventually a Board member. All the while, I continued to meet new, interesting, and deeply caring individuals. Regardless of profession or background, there seem to be many appealing personal characteristics shared by mediators. I feel that I am an improved person as a result of being a mediator, and I credit the people associated with the Virginia Conflict Resolution Center with making my transition to Hampton Roads ultimately successful. I am also convinced that this little Center touched the lives of at least 100,000 people, counting trainees, staff, volunteers, and those impacted by its services.
The DRS staff traveled on March 30, 2012 to Norfolk to join the VCRC staff for a potluck lunch in celebration of the Center. It was a bittersweet time of reflection on shared accomplishments and the voiced hopes and dreams for the future as they would scatter to explore ways to continue individually furthering the peace mission they shared as a team. It was a time of both tears and laughter, and it was easy to see and appreciate the bonds that had cemented their relationships as they served their community over the years.

One of the highlights of the celebration was Chuck Hardwick sharing that when he faced hip replacement surgery recently, he and Andréa Palmisano made a pact that they would dance together following his recovery. Andréa was one of the Center volunteers who represented it in the United Way’s Dancing with the Stars fundraiser. It seems dancing has become a tradition at the Center, from Karen Richards and Judy Rubin’s training metaphor of co-mediation as the act of dancing as partners, to choreographed dancing performed in honor of volunteers leaving the Center. Chuck and Andréa delighted the gathering with a wonderful dance; then others joined in with enthusiasm and flair.

The final event of the day was gathering in the Peace Garden to bury a time capsule filled with memories of the Center and messages for the future written by those in attendance. Gathered in a circle around the Peace Pole, all were invited to share from their hearts what the Center has meant to them. It was a moving experience, again dotted with laughter over funny memories, touching thoughts evoking heartfelt tears, and loving hugs among dear friends. A fitting tribute to service well rendered by a passionate bunch of people who truly believe in the power of conflict resolution through the process of mediation. Well done, VCRC, and thank you for your amazing contributions.
The DRS staff attended an open house at the new offices of CMG Foundation on April 20th. The facility is in an aesthetically peaceful setting, very conducive to facilitating mediations with parties in conflict. Attorney-mediator Morna Ellis is not new to the ADR field, having founded Commonwealth Mediation Group in 1996, providing mediation services to the courts and in the community and at one time assumed many of the administrative responsibilities for the Virginia Mediation Network.

It is exciting to see the formation of a new non-profit community mediation center to serve the Greater Richmond Area. CMG Foundation is now an associate member of the Virginia Association for Community Conflict Resolution. Once it is awarded 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status, the Foundation will be admitted to full VACCR membership.
The following was submitted by Morna Ellis, President of CMG Foundation.

Community mediation centers are the backbone of mediation in Virginia. These centers traditionally offer early, easy access to conflict resolution, thereby directing conflict situations away from violence and encouraging stronger, more harmonious communities. However, for a number of years, this core has been missing in metropolitan Richmond. CMG Foundation was recently formed to fill this gap. It aims to bring a healthy, collaborative approach to conflict resolution in the city, and halt the growing trend of violence as a solution to conflict by offering and encouraging affordable mediation and training services.

To recognize Governor McDonnell’s March is Mediation Month this year, CMG Foundation sponsored a number of community events to promote the use of mediation throughout the area. This included free breakfast seminars for attorneys, real estate and financial professionals, and a free Mediation Day for the public. Channel 12 featured the Foundation on its evening news section, and four CMG volunteers handled their Call 12 on March 26th, responding to over fifty calls during the evening session.

CMG Foundation continued in this spirit over the month of April. The organization presented at Career Day at one of our local schools on April 20th, and hosted several information seminars on mediation throughout April and will continue to do so in the upcoming months. April also held some exciting, new changes for CMG as it moved to the Arboretum on April 9th. This lovely, new location boasts extra mediation rooms and a training room. To celebrate this move, CMG Foundation hosted an Open House on April 20th. Please visit its website, www.cmg-foundation.org for updates and news of additional events.

Please contact CMG Foundation if you are interested in volunteering or in being a community partner.

About CMG Foundation:
CMG Foundation is a non-profit organization founded to help resolve disputes amicably in our community by offering affordable alternative dispute resolution solutions and training for individuals, businesses, communities and schools. We are currently in the process of seeking 501(c)(3) Tax-Exempt Status.

Contact: Morna Ellis CMG Foundation, Arboretum I, 9100 Arboretum Parkway, Suite 190, Richmond, VA 23236; www.cmg-foundation.org; Phone: (804) 254 2664.

Fairfield Center is Busy in the Community

The Center held its 5th annual Valley Plane Pull in early April, pulling in a net income of over $10,000 which directly supports its Community Mediation Program for Families. For some fun photos of the event, use the link from the Plan Pull article on the web site of The Fairfield Center.

Because Fairfield Center is inspired by community initiatives that gather together people, ideas, social entrepreneurship and community, it is partnering with a national movement to bring IGNITE Harrisonburg events to the community. Fairfield Center is offering a prize of $3,000 in the form of Center services to the overall winner of IGNITE Harrisonburg to further develop and support its ideas and goals toward success.

Services provided to the winner will be a day-long retreat (or two half days) with the winner’s team, organization or partners. Services also include limited pre-retreat and post-retreat support to develop the agenda and goals of the retreat and to compile outcomes and action steps. Fairfield Center is offering this award of services as a partner with IGNITE Harrisonburg, supporting the creative conversations and entrepreneurial spirit of the community.
Hello All!

I know it has been a while since a lot of you took your mentoring course (2006!) and with a busy life it is easy to forget the nitty gritty of mentoring. I wanted to take this opportunity to remind you all of some more obscure requirements in the Mentoring Guidelines just to help you help mentees have a successful mentorship. It is very frustrating for mentees to get all the way through mentorship, get all of their paperwork together, send it in, and then receive a message from me that they can’t certify because they need an extra case, another mentor, or one of their cases can’t count towards certification.

First, here’s a review of the certification requirements for the two certifications most often sought by applicants: general and family.

**General**

- **2 observations**
  - Observations may take place before or after the basic training; however, they MUST take place before co-mediations.

- **3 co-mediations**

- **Minimum 5 hours of co-mediation**

- **At least 1 agreement where the mentee served as the primary scrivener**
  - This means the mentee needs to write the entire agreement with minimal input from the mentor. The mentor should serve as a guide and help the mentee when he or she is stuck or needs information about court particulars; however, the mentor should not write any of the agreement.

  - This agreement must be written for the parties and cannot be a practice agreement.

**Family**

- **2 observations**
  - Observations may take place before or after the family training; however, they MUST take place before co-mediations

- **5 co-mediations**

- **Minimum 10 hours of co-mediation**

- **At least 1 agreement where the mentee served as the primary scrivener**
  - This means the mentee needs to write the entire agreement with minimal input from the mentor. The mentor should serve as a guide and help the mentee when he or she is stuck or needs information about court particulars; however, the mentor should not write any of the agreement.

  - This agreement must be written for the parties and cannot be a practice agreement.

- **A child support worksheet where the mentee calculated support by hand for the parties.**
Second, here are some easy-to-forget requirements that apply to all certifications, unless otherwise noted:

عقيلية 1: Mentees may only count 2 cases per day towards certification.

• This includes observations and co-mediations. For example, if a mentee does 1 observation and 2 co-mediations in a day, only the observation and first co-mediation can count towards recertification.

• Mentees are not prohibited from doing more than 2 cases a day for experience; they just cannot count the additional cases towards certification.

عقيلية 2: Mentees must have at least 2 different mentors during their mentorship.

• This includes both observations and co-mediations, so if a mentee has one mentor for observations and a different mentor for co-mediations, he or she has met this requirement.

• For circuit court "shortcut" mentees, the current policy is to accept one mentor for the entire mentorship.

عقيلية 3: Mentors must fill out a Mentee Portfolio Form for every mediation they conduct with a mentee. It is acceptable to use the same form for multiple sessions of a single mediation.

عقيلية 4: Mentees must present the portfolio forms for each of their previous co-mediations to their current mentor. If mentees do not have portfolio forms for each of their previous co-mediations, they cannot count their current co-mediation towards recertification.

عقيلية 5: The purpose of the Mentee Portfolio Form is to:

• Set goals for the mediation session in Section I. The goals should build on previous recommendations and goals from previous sessions.

• Evaluate the mentee's progress towards those goals in Section II.

• In Section III, the mentor should make suggestions for future improvement and further training and reading.

• Please see the Mentee Portfolio on the next two pages for examples of how to use the form.

عقيلية 6: Please remember to fill out all the required fields on all forms, and to sign all forms. Also, please remind your mentees to fill out Section IV on the mentee evaluation and to sign the portfolio form. Most certification applications placed on hold are due to an incomplete form or missing signature.

I hope you found these mentoring “cliff notes” helpful. Please do not rely solely upon this quick review when mentoring. I encourage you to bookmark the mentoring guidelines so you can consult them if you have questions in the future. Of course, you may always call DRS with mentoring or any other questions.

Cheers!

Mandy
MENTEE PORTFOLIO FORM

Please use black ink so this document will be legible when scanned.
(To be completed by Mentor and mentee at the end of each co-mediation session.)

Co-Mediation Case #: ☑ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8
Case Type: ☑ GDC ☐ JDR ☐ CCC ☐ CCF
Mentee Mediator: Susie Sunshine

Mentor Mediator: Marty Mentor Certification Number: 0000

(Are you currently certified as a Mentor for this court level? ☑ Yes ☐ No)

Date(s) of Mediation: 00/00/00

Section I: Skill Development Goals
Complete prior to mediation.

I. MENTOR & MENTEE: (Review previous co-mediation case portfolio pages.) The mentee and Mentor identified the following goals for the mentee’s skill development during the case.

1. Do the introduction phase, including the agreement to mediate and any assessments
2. Start the information sharing phase
3. Work on listening and summarizing skills

Section II: Skill Development Progress
Complete after the co-mediation session.

II. MENTOR: Describe the mentee’s progress toward the skill development goals identified in Section I.

1. Susie did well with the Introduction. She tripped some on the statutory language in the agreement, which is not unusual for a nervous mentee doing her first co-mediation.
2. She started clients on the information sharing phase with a welcoming question and handled hesitation well.

FORM ADR-1008 (1/09)
3. In summarizing she added some value statements and did some parroting, which wasn’t helpful. She was able to experience a summarization that fell flat and was able to recover without my help.

Section III: Skill Development Priorities
Complete after the co-mediation session or at the conclusion of the case.

III. MENTOR: Based on your post-mediation discussions with the mentee and your observations during the case, identify the skill development priorities you recommend for the mentee in subsequent mediations. Include any recommendations you may have for additional training, reading, or other developmental activity.

Susie should familiarize herself with the agreement to mediate and be responsible for it in her next co-mediation. She should work on listening for the subtext of what parties are saying and try to pull the subtext out during summarization, instead of merely parroting what the parties say. I recommend she check out The Mediator’s Handbook.

Marty Mentor
Signature of Mentor

2/19/10
Date

Susie Sunshine
Signature of Mentee

2/19/10
Date
CERTIFICATE of RECOGNITION

By virtue of the authority vested by the Constitution in the Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia, there is hereby officially recognized:

MEDIATION MONTH

WHEREAS, the Virginia Mediation Network, the Restorative Justice Association of Virginia, and the Virginia Association for Community Conflict Resolution are growing professional entities that strengthen the dispute resolution services available to citizens, families, businesses, and government bodies; and

WHEREAS, with the continuing efforts of the Virginia Administrative Dispute Resolution Act Interagency Advisory Council, public bodies or the Commonwealth are demonstrating a growing commitment to innovation in problem-solving and the application of creative actions and behaviors when faced with complex issues and disputes; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia Alternative Dispute Resolution Joint Committee, a joint committee of the Virginia Bar Association and the Virginia Bar, supports education of the Bench, the Bar, law students, and the public on the advantages of appropriate dispute resolution options and encourages collaborative practices; and

WHEREAS, the Attorney-Client Fee Dispute Committee of the Virginia State Bar supports the use of mediation or arbitration to resolve fee disputes between attorneys and clients; and

WHEREAS, mediation practices and skills are being applied in the workplace by leaders, managers and supervisors who have embraced the power and efficiency of open communication and collaborative problem-solving; and

WHEREAS, mediators and other dispute resolution practitioners through their significant expertise in helping stakeholders find durable solutions to important issues, have demonstrated the value of the field of alternative dispute resolution; and

WHEREAS, mediation, along with the principles and practices that it embodies, can be a crucial tool for peacemaking between individual, groups, units, neighborhoods or countries, and the Commonwealth of Virginia continues to be a national leader in those efforts;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Robert F. McDonnell, do hereby recognize March 2012 as MEDIATION MONTH in our COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA, and I call this observance to the attention of all our citizens.

Governor

Janet V. Polyak
Secretary of the Commonwealth
Fairfield Center in Harrisonburg Goes "Live"

Fairfield Center has been serving the Central Shenandoah Valley community for thirty years and for the second year in a row promoted March is Mediation Month in cooperation with public radio station WMRA's Virginia Insight program. On March 1st, listeners tuned in to hear Fairfield Center's Executive Director, Tim Ruebke, and The Institute for Environmental Negotiation's Director, Dr. E. Franklin Dukes, share tips for more effectively communicating with someone who doesn't see things the way you do. To listen to this broadcast event, click on the WMRA link.

Mediation Center of Charlottesville's Celebration of Civility

By Kristine Terrell, Acute Angle Copywriting

The Mediation Center of Charlottesville hosted its Celebration of Civility with a breakfast in the ballroom of the Farmington Country Club in Charlottesville, on Friday, March 23. Guest speaker, Justice William Mims, addressed MCC mediators, board members, staff and supporters.

In his talk, Justice Mims credited the Mediation Center for its positive impact on society. He underscored that culture steers legislation, and because The Mediation Center's work is really about changing the way people interact with one another, they are driving social norms and hence, social policy.

While serving in the Virginia House of Delegates and the Virginia Senate, Justice Mims supported legislation to introduce mediation as an option for litigating parties. He acknowledged in his talk that mediation has changed his profession and the court system over the course of his career into one that is less adversarial and better at serving people's needs.

He explained that a benefit of mediation is that it encourages us to follow a doctrine found in many religions – a form of the Golden Rule - "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you"; that encouraging selflessness will help elevate civility as the expected behavior in society. He challenges us to become more selfless by telling ourselves every day, “It's not about me”— the first line of one of his favorite books, Jim Collins' Good to Great.

Justice Mims was warm and inspirational and injected humor into his talk with self-deprecating legal jokes. He conveyed a genuine appreciation for the work done by the Mediation Center and other community centers across the state and applauded their civil leadership creating positive change in Charlottesville and Virginia.

MCC has already begun planning its 2nd annual Celebration of Civility breakfast for next year. The funds raised from this event will go towards continuing work to change cultural attitudes by supporting the work of the Mediation Center and by funding a scholarship for a graduating high school senior who exemplifies the Mediation Center's peacemaking values.

This event would not have been possible without the gracious support of Miller Law Group, PC and the Virginia Association of Community Conflict Resolution.
PDRC in Warrenton offered a breakfast seminar to the community on March 29th for March is Mediation Month, cleverly billed as "Conflicts and Croissants; Donuts and Disputes." Sponsored by the Virginia Association of Community Conflict Resolution, the invitation posed the questions: "Ever wonder why you react to conflict the way you do? How about your spouse, children, co-worker or boss? Wish you had better tools to handle conflicts in your life?"

Participants were given the opportunity to take a test to learn their styles of conflict management, followed by a discussion of how these styles impact approaches to conflict resolution and negotiation.

**DRS Hosts Third Annual ADR Brown Bag Lunch Series**

The Office of Dispute Resolution Services again celebrated Mediation Month with a series of lunch programs at the Office of the Executive Secretary for the purpose of acquainting court employees in Richmond with what we like to call "appropriate dispute resolution" options. The topics and presenters included:

**Peer Mediation with Paul Fleischer from the Richmond Peace Education Center**

Peer Mediation is a conflict resolution system in which children, sometimes as young as elementary school, are trained to mediate disputes between their peers. Mr. Fleischer described what a peer mediation program is intended to do in a school or in other youth-serving...
settings, how it works, how students are trained, and the value students and staff gain from its implementation.

**Neutral Case Evaluation with Program Coordinator**

**Jodi Nash from Fauquier Circuit Court**

In the NCE program, experienced attorneys serve *pro bono* as evaluators in settlement conferences for personal injury, contract, tort and domestic relations cases. The collaboration of the Fauquier County Bar Association with NCE has resulted in an invaluable conservation of court time and judicial resources.

**Community Dialogue/ Civil Engagement Summits with Kai Degner, Director of Organizational Communication at The Fairfield Center in Harrisonburg**

The Fairfield Center has created and successfully implemented a community dialogue model that maximizes the potential for many community members to collaboratively discuss and address vital community issues like sustainability, strengthening local business/economy, health and wellness, supporting youth and families in crisis, and interfaith relations. Mr. Degner explained how their community dialogue program is used in the Harrisonburg region to encourage public involvement to resolve community-wide problems.

We enjoyed sharing some of what is being accomplished through ADR programs in Virginia with groups of enthusiastic employees at each session. Our speakers all did a terrific job, and the mouth-watering desserts provided by the DRS staff have become a fun tradition as well.
An Exploration of Mastery and Incompetence in Mediation
- a brief summary for those who missed the forum

Peter S. Adler, PhD, mediator, author, and former director of the Hawaii State Judiciary’s Center for Alternative Dispute Resolution, discussed characteristics that distinguish masters of a discipline from practitioners who are unconscious of their own incompetence. Masters embrace kinā‘ole (flawlessness). While they cannot explain how they do what they do, they are never satisfied with their current level of skill and engage in constant refinement. In contrast, those who are incompetent are overly self-confident and unable to recognize or learn from their mistakes. As a result of this lack of self-reflection, their skill level does not improve. While mediators may fall at either end of the spectrum, most are likely to demonstrate a skill level in the middle of a bell curve.

Mediation is a craft rather than a profession, according to Adler. Mediators engage in a learning sequence from apprentice to journeyman, and like practitioners of any craft, may improve their natural gifts by maintaining their curiosity and taking proactive measures. By seeking out teachers and observing models, engaging in practice and repetition to store sequences unconsciously, and continuing study, one may achieve “moments of grace” in practice.

Adler stated that mastery in mediation comprises ten core competencies that are overlapping and interdependent: negotiation, communication, problem-solving, information management and analysis, group dynamics, case and project management, leadership, accountability, and tool boxes of both strategies and exercises. Each major competency comprises several specific supporting competencies which require ongoing attention and development, fueled by self-awareness and passion for the craft.
Is Marriage Dying in Virginia?

In February, the month for romance, it was disheartening to read the results of three recent surveys that reveal that the prevalence of marriage is at an all-time low, with just 51% of American adults married today. The childhood fantasy of meeting the man or woman of your dreams, having an extravagant wedding, then settling down to have children in your dream house, appears to be less sought today.

A new generation has grown up in a world where marriage is not a certainty and where there was a high divorce rate among their parents. Divorce rates rose dramatically in the 70’s and 80’s and continue to rise. As a result, the children of these past generations may be leery of the very thought of marriage. Often, they did not grow up in a stable and conflict free family. So many singles appear to be enjoying their unencumbered and unmarried state that two-thirds aren’t even sure they want to marry.

Coupling the above statistics with the fact that one out of every two marriages in Virginia now results in divorce; that Virginia has a higher divorce rate than ever before and the highest divorce rate in the Southern portion of the US; and that there are more unmarried couples living together in Virginia than married couples, one can certainly argue that there is an evolving death of marriage in the Commonwealth.

Why, if Virginia’s Motto is “Virginia is for Lovers” (albeit a certain class of lovers), are there so many couples choosing not to marry and so many divorces in Virginia?

First of all, relationships are difficult to maintain. In many cases there seem to be both an unwillingness to admit certain aspects of the relationship are not working and a lack of commitment to seek third party intervention, such as mediation or therapy.

Why is marriage so difficult? Because two becoming one is extremely demanding. Remember the three-legged race, when two people with their legs tied together tried to run in harmony? They must surrender personal ego and work as a team. It is both challenging and difficult.

We all enter into a relationship with the expectation that it will always be exciting and romantic and free of conflict. The foundation of a happy marriage is deep friendship and intimacy. It is a continual process of learning the other’s likes, dislikes, fears, hopes and dreams. It is a partnership that requires the active participation of both parties. We all want to avoid conflicts, but conflicts are inevitable and how a couple resolves conflicts can be the “glue” that keeps them together.

A recent UCLA study suggested that there are four broad reasons seemingly happy couples are divorcing: (1) some couples are simply not as committed as other couples that stay together -- commitment has been shown to be an important factor as couples deal with difficulties and challenges in married life; (2) partners who seem satisfied with marriage have different personalities that, over time, lead to a decline in marital satisfaction; (3) some couples encounter more stressful and challenging situations in life and these difficulties lead to divorce; and (4) despite the aspects of marriage and life that are rewarding, there may be subtle communication and conflict difficulties that progressively undermine the relationship.
Virginia society and lawmakers are more interested in debating who should be able to “marry” than in accepting that marriage between two people, whatever their sexual preference, is extremely challenging and very difficult. As long as we continue to debate the form of marriage and not the substance of marriage, we shall remain in the dark ages.

The real problem for marriage today is that no one spells out the challenges in advance of saying “I do”. Society spends mega bucks promoting the ceremony and reception surrounding the wedding and does nothing to prepare couples for the hard work of marriage. Likewise, nothing like the bridal showers, bachelor parties, and rehearsal dinners that surround the entry into marriage exists to help the divorcing person leave what at one time was a sanctified relationship.

By now I hope I have made my case. Marriage is difficult, as with any personal relationship. Married life was never intended to be easy. It is not easy for heterosexuals or unmarried or same-sex couples. It is not easy for Republicans or Democrats. Better marriages are not found in Christian or Muslim marriages. Marriage is hard work, and the truth is most people are too lazy to live up to the challenge and have a successful marriage. worst of all, society perpetuates the illusion that a marriage license is all you need to succeed in one of the most challenging aspects of life.

As long as we are worried about who can marry and who cannot marry, we remain in denial about the struggles and challenges within all marriages and we stay stuck with an empty form of marriage rather than striving to obtain those “gold medals” available to the hard working few who search for perfection within the married state.

Further, the way we divorce in our culture dishonors the institution of marriage. Marriage is one of the most important relationships we form in life. Its beginning is endowed with ceremony, sanctity, and hope. Since divorce is, in its most technical terms, the breaking of a legal contract, our society handles it through the legal system. Yet, the current legal divorce procedure completely ignores the fact that a divorce is also the breaking of an emotional contract. Its ending is marked by professionally orchestrated ritualized combat, which, more often than not, leaves in its wake a trail of bitterness and hostility that ruptures families forever. Attorneys use the adversarial process to get the most they can for their client and often the result is that one party “wins” and the other party “loses.” Prolonged and ugly court battles, ultimately decided by a judge who may understand little of the dynamics of the particular family involved, frequently result in wounds that never heal completely. The vindictiveness runs so deep that some spouses want to destroy each other, using the legal system as their weapon. Others act in underhanded ways out of fear of what their partners will do. In my forty years of practice, most people I have met whose divorce was bitter and acrimonious wished it hadn’t been that way.

Law students are being told that “family law stabilizes and strengthens marriage, reorders broken families, and protects the best interests of children.” To the contrary, our legal system can destroy families by treating the parties as adversaries and undermining ongoing relationships between parents and their children. Attorneys are ethically obligated to represent the interests of their clients, and only their clients. Unfortunately, an attorney’s zeal can fuel anger and conflict in divorce, as a growing sense of righteous indignation focuses each party only on his or her interests. Further, when parents are in dispute, the law’s goal of making custody decisions according to children’s vaguely defined “best interests” can exacerbate the conflict between the parents.

Resolving conflict either within a marriage, or in ending a marriage, is immensely important to the lives of the people immediately involved. Accordingly, the most constructive means possible should be used so that both parties can redefine their relationships or start their new lives on firm ground. So, as mediators, what can we do to assist parties that are dissatisfied with their current status or may be considering ending their relationships?
First of all, we need to shift our focus from strictly working with divorcing couples to unmarried couples, blended families and same sex families. The majority of couples living together in Virginia are unmarried. Virginia’s family law statutes do not embrace their living arrangements and their rights are greatly restricted. The juvenile and domestic relations courts do offer relief to couples with children in common. However, the majority of couples are without basic rights or standing in our courts. Mediation can prove a great source of assistance in helping to formulate unmarried partnership (“cohabitation”) agreements and in resolving non-traditional “family” conflicts.

Second, we need to look for ways that couples can “reboot” their relationships instead of ending them. One way is what I call a “relationship check-up.” Just like an annual medical check-up that gives a party a picture of his or her overall physical health, a relationship check-up gives the party a detailed picture of the areas in their relationship that are working well and are healthy, as well as the areas that require their attention. A mediator can help the parties identify their sources of conflict and how they can be better managed. A mediator will then be able to assist the parties in facilitating discussions that redefine their current relationship, and/or navigate emotional and legal hurdles and protect their children’s well-being. We can refer the parties to appropriate resources, such as therapists, attorneys, coaches, and financial experts, to help them resolve their problems.

About 30% of my mediation practice involves couples who are looking to improve their relationships rather than to dissolve them. Also, there are a number of couples that cannot separate at this time due to the economy and the fact that one of their biggest assets, their house, is underwater. Mediation can assist these couples in “living under the same roof” until a more favorable division of assets can be accomplished.

Third, we need to promote educational programs to all types of couples on how to continue and/or transform relationships. We need to promote pre-marital education that addresses the real substance of marriage, including the need for commitment, open communication and problem-solving skills. How many couples contemplate entering into a relationship, during the dating and courtship period, without inquiring about the earlier history of their partner? Was he or she loved, nurtured, and well cared for? Or did negative events occur such as verbal or physical abuse? After all, marriage involves two people with completely separate histories, and a successful marriage requires that both have the emotional capacity to trust and to give and receive love. As the comics character, “Popeye” (now I’m showing my age), used to say, “I am what I am.” We can’t change people, but we can certainly help couples to manage and modify negative behavior.

Also, we need to promote more psychological services to families who struggle with violence and domestic abuse. Whether it is the economy, loss of employment, rising debt, etc., domestic violence is increasing and our courts are ill-equipped to deal with the same.

In conclusion, the focus of mediation is changing to address the needs of non-married and non-traditional couples in addition to divorcing couples and its importance as a collaborative and effective conflict management process has never been more in demand. Embrace it!

Submitted by Attorney-Mediator Tazewell Hubard of Norfolk, certified mediator since 1993
Happy Spring 2012!
May You Enjoy the Signs of New Life All Around

Virginia Mediation Network News

Board Vacancies  VMN will be filling three Board member vacancies in September 2012. Anyone who is interested may contact Nomination Committee Chair, Danny Burk, at 703-668-0344 or by email at dan@resolutionpoint.com.

VMN Conference  Save the date for the VMN Fall Training Conference from September 30 through October 2, 2012 at Wintergreen Resort. The theme is "Skill-Building, Diagnostic Tools, Mentoring, and Ethics for the Advanced (and Newer) Mediator: Enhancing our Growth and Awareness." Conference Co-Chairs, Paula Young and Jennifer Phillips, are seeking quality presentations, and a Call for Speakers/Proposals has been posted to the VMN website. The letter outlines the "wish list" the membership has expressed an interest in learning more about, and you will find a form on which to submit proposals if you wish to be considered as a plenary or workshop presenter.

Model Standards for Mediator Certification Programs

The Association for Conflict Resolution (ACR) recently adopted the Model Standards for Mediation Certification Programs. As the acknowledgement page of the Model Standards explains, "The standards result from a critical examination of contemporary mediator assessment models and, extrapolating from these models, the components integral to establishing mediator credentialing programs." The link above will take you to the ACR website if you wish to read the Model Standards. If you were able to attend the ABA Section of Dispute Resolution's Spring Conference in D.C. April 18-21, 2012, you may have taken part in the discussion on whether arbitrators and mediators should be regulated. You are welcome to contact the DRS office with feedback from that discussion.
Neighborhood Assistance Program

Lawrie Parker, Executive Director of the Piedmont Dispute Resolution Center in Warrenton, successfully worked to get House Bill 368, proposed legislation to add mediators to the list of professionals eligible for Virginia tax credits when they volunteer for a non-profit community mediation center, introduced and passed in the 2012 General Assembly. This bill was endorsed by the Virginia Bar Association, the Virginia Mediation Network and the Virginia Association of Community Conflict Resolution. The Patron was Michael J. Webert.

The Bill summary as introduced was: Neighborhood assistance tax credits; eligibility of certain mediators. Provides that mediators certified under guidelines of the Judicial Council of Virginia who provide mediation services, without charge, at the direction of an approved neighborhood organization that provided court-referred mediation services would be eligible for neighborhood assistance tax credits.

History of Passage of HB368
http://leg1.state.va.us/cgi-bin/legp504.exe?ses=121&typ=bil&val=hb368

At the above web page, there is a link provided under "full text" that is labeled pdf/impact statement. This will show you the Department of Taxation 2012 Fiscal Impact Statement, which applies to HB 368 and several related bills.

New Mediating Child Support Brochures Available

A collaborative effort of the Virginia State Bar Family Law Section and the Dispute Resolution Services Division of the Office of the Executive Secretary has produced two new brochures on mediating child support. Both may be accessed and downloaded on the Virginia Judicial System web site under Mediation Resources and Reference Materials.

"Mediating Child Support: A Resource for Attorneys and Mediators"
"Mediating Child Support: Things to Know Before You Go"

Congratulations to Our Newly Certified Mediators and New Mentors

New mediators who have received court certification since January 1, 2012.

Kelly Blessing - GDC  Randy Jones - GDC
Docia Casillas - GDC  Senior Justice Lawrence Koontz - CCC
Paulette Craig - GDC  Louis Levy - GDC
Dori Frazier - J&DR  Janet O'Connell - GDC
Carolyn Graham - J&DR  Nisha Patel - J&DR
Meryem Grammick - GDC  Cynthia Potter - J&DR
Christopher Heying - J&DR  Suzanne Praill - J&DR
Christopher Hill - GDC  Katy Rother - GDC
Leonard Huh - GDC  Izabela Solosi - GDC
Tanya Hunter - GDC  Hon. Glen Tyler - CCC
Magdy Ibrahim - J&DR  Temple Wilson - GDC

Certified mediators with new mentor status awarded since January 1, 2012:

Kim Graham - GDC and J&DR Mentor
Parent Education Program Changes

The Directory listing court-mandated parent education seminar providers who have been approved by the courts has a new look. From the parent education page, parents looking for a class can click on their judicial locality under either a circuit court list or a J&DR court list.

Recently, new instructions and an application form for those wishing to become court-approved seminar providers have been posted to the parent education web page under "Information for Providers." Parent education provider training and networking events are also listed on a calendar.

On April 13, 2012, forty-eight attendees took advantage of a Training the Trainer class taught by Parent Education Coordinator, Ann Warshauer, and Mary Shepherd, Program Coordinator for the Work and Family Institute. It is reassuring to see the caliber of qualified professionals who continue to express an interest in providing these classes, designed to help separating, divorcing and never married parents consider what is best for their children as they parent them from separate homes.

The Ninth Annual Parent Educators Symposium is scheduled for May 11, 2012 at the Supreme Court Building in Richmond. Identical morning and afternoon sessions will include such topics as needs of adult learners and their learning styles, small group work on teaching techniques to engage participants in the learning process, and discussion of resources for parent educators. There will also be a panel discussion on what instructors need to know when parties are involved in family violence. A registration form for the Symposium is available from the Training and Symposium Calendar. The deadline to register is May 4, 2012.

Mediation Forms Available in Revisable PDF Format

Forms and applications used for mediation that are posted to the Virginia Judicial System Website are now available in both Word format and in Revisable PDF format. The Word documents may be downloaded to your computer, filled in, saved on your computer for future reference, and either printed or emailed to the DRS office. The advantage to using the revisable PDF documents is that they are neater and simpler to complete. Please keep in mind that, unless you have advanced Adobe Acrobat software on your computer, the PDF documents cannot be saved for future reference, but only printed.

An Easy-to-Print Version of Resolutions Available

Resolutions newsletters are posted to the website in a PDF format. If you wish to print the newsletter for any reason, the PDF format with all the color graphics can be expensive and slow in printing. You may request that an easy-to-print, no-frills version of the newsletter be emailed to you by contacting Melanie Rinehults at mrinehults@courts.state.va.us