



# Newsletter

Of the **CONFLICT RESOLUTION CENTER** OF **MONTGOMERY COUNTY**

"Strengthening our communities – peace by peace"

Winter 2006

## *A Word From the Executive Director* *By Merle Rockwell*

Lately, I have taken to quoting Margaret Mead, "Never doubt that a small group of committed citizens can make a difference.... indeed that is the only thing that ever has". It reminds me of all the good work CRCMC, its volunteers and partners do every day. We are fortunate to live in a County where people care and want to make a difference, right here where we live. Together, we have repaired broken relationships across generations, helped young parents develop skills to co-parent when they don't live together, facilitated community meetings to bring people together around issues that are splitting them apart, brought together youth who have caused harm with those who have been affected by their behavior and learned new ways to make things better, offered mediation as an alternative to going to court to restore trust or to keep a promise and have done all of the above in both English and Spanish. We have much to be proud of and, as we begin a New Year, it is with the belief that together, we can continue to do great things!

### *Our Current Projects:*

**Day of Trial Mediations.** CRCMC volunteers mediate in the District Courts in Rockville and Silver Spring on Wednesdays. The judge, or attorneys refer cases for mediation. Some parties seek mediation themselves. Mediation involves small claims, interpersonal issues, workplace disputes, consumer disputes and neighbor conflicts. CRCMC schedules the volunteers for observations and day of trial mediations, assures continuing quality of their practices and, continually trains them in best practices.

**Peace Orders.** CRCMC volunteer mediators mediate Peace Orders in the District Court on Tuesdays. These cases are always about relationships that have broken down for one reason or another. Mediation offers the participants an opportunity to decide together how they want to interact with one another. Mediating these cases requires extra training

**Community Conferencing (CCI).** Community conference is a form of restorative justice in which a facilitated discussion takes place involving youth. Referrals come from the Dept. of Juvenile Justice, police and Montgomery County public schools. The CCI Program Director manages intake and scheduling.

**Community Group Facilitation.** CRCMC has at least 18 trained facilitators to respond to requests from communities; Park & Planning and individuals who desire the assistance of neutral facilitators to help them work through problems facing their community. These meetings may be with several different groups within the community and can extend over several months. Intake and arrangements are made through CRCMC staff and our volunteer Services Committee.

**Commission on Common Ownership.** CRCMC mediates disputes between homeowners and their association boards. As a result, more and more communities learn about CRCMC and turn to CRCMC to help resolve neighbor-to-neighbor and interpersonal disputes.

**Remedes (Spanish Language Mediators).** CRCMC has a strong partner in Remedes, a network of Spanish Speaking trained mediators in the metropolitan DC area. We are able to conduct mediations entirely in Spanish, using the co-mediation model. We are also able to conduct other ADR processes in Spanish. We have a bi-lingual ADR Coordinator to respond in person and by phone in Spanish and English and have a presence in the District Court to divert appropriate cases before they are filed. The CRCMC staff manages mediations.

**Families Foremost Center Partnership.** This is a partnership with a private, non-profit social services center that offers training and support to young, disadvantaged parents. CRCMC is currently providing these parents with 7 trainings sessions. CRCMC has also trained staff in basic mediation skills.

**Family Mediation Program.** CRCMC is partnering with the Dept. of Health & Human Services to mediate the conditions under which a young mother can remain in a home, rather than enter the shelter system with her young children. Initial screening for active drug and alcohol abuse, or child abuse is done with Emergency Housing Services. Mediations are jointly scheduled and managed by CRCMC staff. There is a social worker present during the mediations to assure that appropriate services are being offered.

**Montgomery County Public Schools** This is a partnership with the three school unions and EAP to mediate interpersonal disputes between all 20,000, school personnel. The first call is made to EAP who screen for contract issues before forwarding

the information to CRCMC for follow-up with other participants, and scheduling activities.

**Parent Plan Mediations:** CRCMC currently has over 18 volunteer mediators who are mediating ways for unmarried parents to co-parent their children. Additional training is required to mediate these kinds of issues.

**Parent/Teen Mediation:** Five of our volunteers have taken special training to be able to mediate these types of conflicts. CRCMC trained several teens in our October 2005 basic mediation training in order to be able to have a co-mediation team of one adult and one teen when mediating parent teen conflicts.

**Senior Mediations:** CRCMC is partnering with a statewide task force looking into training, partnerships and referral possibilities for these special kinds of disputes. A survey of interest has already been conducted with current CRCMC volunteers.

### *Highlights of our Accomplishments*

- Mediated over 350 cases and are well on our way to exceeding that number in FY 2006.
- Held a 50-hour Basic Mediation training, at no charge, to selected Montgomery County residents. This class included teenagers and representatives of the Latino and African-American communities
- Conducted over 27 Community Conferences, with referrals from Montgomery County Public Schools, Police and Department of Juvenile Services, as a diversion program to the courts for youthful offenders.
- Offered a series of training programs for county agencies
- Entered into Memo of Understanding with Health and Human Services to design and implement a Family Mediation Program to mediate broken relationships between a young mother and those with whom she resides and to facilitate the services she can access.
- CRCMC trained staff of Health & Human Services Emergency Housing in intake and referral procedures for referring emergency shelter cases to mediation.

### *Who's Doing What*

#### *Community Conferencing Initiative*

Thanks to a third year of funding from the Maryland Judiciary's Mediation and Conflict Resolution Office (MACRO),

CRCMC continues to offer the restorative Justice process, Community Conferencing, to juveniles, their victims and the community of people affected by an incident. In our

first grant year, we had 25 referrals; in our second, 46 and, referrals are increasing.

During the last school year, 2004/5, we found that almost all of our referrals came from DJS. About a third of those were connected to schools. Therefore, CRCMC decided this last summer to present Community Conferencing program to as many school principals as possible. We met with 11 and so far this fall we have received 12 direct referrals from schools. Many of the incidents happen off site from the school involved, so our program saves school administrators the time that they previously had to devote to these incidents. As the word gets around about the help we are offering, we will see many more schools referring cases to us. Contact: Peter Meleney, CRCMC's Community Conferencing Program Manager, at [cciofmc@aol.com](mailto:cciofmc@aol.com).

### *Training Our People*

The Internal Training Committee arranged a series of programs for CRCMC volunteers. They've been very well attended and are a great way to sharpen mediator skills and to get to know fellow mediators. In 2005, the Internal Training Committee held the following mini-trainings:

- January** – Richard Alper "Leonard Riskin's Styles of Mediation"  
**February** – Carl Schneider "The Power of Apology"  
**March** – Fred Boykin "The Use of Enneagram in Mediation"

After chairing this committee for several years, Amanda LaForge is stepping down as chair. We are grateful for her contributions that help all of us stay engaged in the learning process. At this time, we are seeking interested volunteers to help plan internal training and identify trainers. If you are interested in either, please call the CRCMC office. Donations are also welcome for the "light supper" that accompanies our mini-trainings.

### *Services Committee Activities*

The Service committee developed a three-step intake procedure for potential Community Facilitation cases. The Committee also conducted an extensive survey of members of our Facilitation and Mediation panels to inventory their respective experience, expertise and training and to survey their interest in providing training through CRCMC. This will be a resource for training requests from schools and organizations.

The Services Committee has investigated ways to more effectively provide training to Montgomery County agencies and residents. In 2005 CRCMC provided facilitator teams to a number of community groups and associations including:

- The Wheaton Redevelopment Board for a strategic planning session;
- The Kensington Heights/Wheaton Citizens Association for goals/values clarification in negotiation with an adjoining developer.
- CRCMC also provided a larger facilitation team to the Burtonsville business community for six meetings addressing the improvement and realignment of major commercial arteries through and around Burtonsville, in coordination with the Office of Councilperson Marilyn Praisner and the Park and Planning Commission. Contact information: Richard Alper at [rsalperesq@aol.com](mailto:rsalperesq@aol.com)

## ***Development Committee Activities***

Wolfgang Mergner, chair of the Development Committee reports that fund raising was successful during 2005. CRCMC was supported by contributions from the board members and donations from friends, supporters, fund raising events and a Film Event held in partnership with the Diversity Institute at Montgomery College. CRCMC received support from Giant, & Whole foods for the film event. CRCMC also received a special one-year grant from MACRO to support a Bi-Lingual ADR Coordinator, a grant from the Takoma Foundation to support that effort and another through the Legacy Leadership program of the University of MD Dept. of Aging to support the training program with the Families Foremost Center.

Future development goals focus on increasing reliance for financial support from sources other than MACRO, currently our largest grantor. We are aware that eighty percent of private financial support for small nonprofit organizations, like ours, comes from individuals who give to their favored cause.

In 2006, we will work harder to be their favored cause. We will also seek support from various sources within Montgomery County, from Government, Corporations and Foundations. The strength of our organization is the partnerships we share, our valued donors and volunteers and all those who practice conflict resolution and mediation and who are supporting the work of peace.  
[wolfgangjmergner@att.net](mailto:wolfgangjmergner@att.net)

## ***Still Climbing After All These Years***

CRCMC has much to be proud of. Last year, we developed or renewed partnerships with the Commission on Common Ownership Communities, Montgomery County. We also intensified the relationship with Public Schools and the Montgomery County Office of Community Outreach in addition to the many other County agencies. We have added mediating parent-teen problems and parenting plans

to our many alternative dispute resolution services. Our mission statement is our guide and driving force.

*"To help Montgomery County Residents manage conflict in a constructive way, by offering collaborative problem solving services such as mediation, facilitation and training." In pursuing our mission, CRCMC is committed to: Making its services accessible to all County Residents. Promoting positive relationships among the many ethnic, racial and religious groups within the County*

We are fortunate to have outstanding volunteers to help us accomplish our goals. Many of our volunteers are not mediators or facilitators, but are business people and community activists who recognize the importance of what we do for the community. We are also fortunate to have a dedicated staff, who believes in what we are doing and devotes far more time and effort to our work than can be expected.

In the upcoming year, CRCMC will face many challenges. It is our collective responsibility to transform those challenges into opportunities. Our Executive Director and "founding mother" Merle Rockwell, will retire June 30, 2006. I can't overstate how much Merle has meant to CRCMC and this brief column is not the place to mention all that Merle has accomplished. We have set up a committee to search for someone to succeed Merle. Notice that I wrote "succeed" and not "replace." No one can replace her, but our new Director will need management, financial and interpersonal skills to guide us in meeting the many challenges ahead. One of those challenges will be to make sure that CRCMC has sufficient funds to allow us to meet our commitments. Our primary source of funding, the Maryland Mediation and Conflict Resolution Office (MACRO) will be changing its method of allocating grant money and we will have to be more self-sufficient. Every one of us should be a spokesperson for CRCMC and I hope that we all recognize the importance of raising funds to ensure CRCMC's continued viability. Finally, I want to thank Alicia Pfund, our Chair for the last year. She has provided inspirational leadership, bringing out the best in all of us. I wish you well Alicia and be assured that I will be seeking your advice many times during the next Two years. Peace to all, Terry  
[verytan@comcast.net](mailto:verytan@comcast.net)

## ***How you can help.***

- Refer people in dispute to CRCMC for mediation.
- Recommend potential members from our diverse communities.
- Help us find resources for funding
- Expand our opportunities to speak in public about the power of mediation & Join us in our outreach.

## *Thanks to all our donots*

CRCMC would like to thank the following contributors for their in-kind donations and cash contributions: J.A. Thompson, M. Hollard, K. Liss, K. Seat, Barry Klein, S. Potter, A. Beall, Linda Vann, T. Stranges, M.D. Clark, G. Schneider, M. Walker, J. Rasmussen, V.R. Cruz, P. Kovar, H. Prenskey, S. Gurian-Sherman, I. Spranger, Adam Vann.

### **CRCMC Moderator** (\$100 or more)

Casma Huie, Fred Press, Genelle Trader, Ramona Buck, Ann Gordon, John Elliot, Lowell Turnbull, Karen Lechter, Lily Bermant, Mark Denbo, Janice McCall, Nicole Vann, Calvert Asset Mgt Co, E. & L. Melder

### **CRCMC Patron** (\$250 or more)

Harold Kessler, Pete Meleney, Wendy Swire, Alicia Pfund Robert Washington

### **CRCMC Conciliator** (\$ 500 or more)

Seekers Church, Elena Blum, Terry Vann, , Barbara Smith-Fennell, Giant Food Store, Whole Foods Market.

### **CRCMC Peace Maker** (\$ 1,000 or more):

Marie B. Edwards, Beverly Denbo, John Urciolo, Robert Scholz, W. & G. Mergner, private foundation.

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The Conflict Resolution Center of Montgomery County  
2424 Reddie Drive, Suite 301,  
Wheaton, MD 20902

## *Donations*

You can make a tax-deductible donation to CRCMC so that we can continue expanding to improve the way residents of Montgomery County manage conflict. Make your checks payable to "CRCMC", ADDRESS:

ADDRESS 2424 Reddie Drive Suite 301  
Wheaton, MD 20902

PayPal: PayPal can be accessed from the CRCMC Website  
[www.crcmc.org](http://www.crcmc.org)

## *Upcoming fvent*

**Sunday, March 12, 2006** 4:00 – 7:00 PM

Second Annual Collaborative Film Festival. festuring:

**"Peace-by-Peace: Women on the Frontlines"**,  
Profiles of women in Afghanistan, Argentina, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Burundi and the US who are building the foundations for sustainable peace.

4 – 5 pm reception

5 – 6 pm movie

6 –7 pm Discussion, lead by **Ambassador**

**John n W. McDonald**, Chairman Institute for Multi-Track Diplomacy.

\$ 25 Tax deductible contribution.