



Dispute Resolution Center Newsletter

June 2017

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The Victim Impact Panel—An Opportunity to Learn, Reflect, and Change by April Rando

The Victim Impact Panel (VIP) presentation is a restorative practice that brings people who have been charged with an offense related to alcohol or drugs to listen to the stories of those who have been harmed by alcohol- or drug- related crime. Participants in the VIP are mandated by the Court to attend this 2-hour presentation. The purpose of the VIP is: 1. To make the offender accountable for their behavior and its consequences; 2. To hear the stories about how similar crimes have impacted the victims, their families, and communities; 3. To provide an opportunity for offenders to change their behavior; and 4. To prevent recidivism.

Last month, approximately 40 participants attended the VIP held at Elm Street Methodist Church in Oneonta. Participants paid \$30 to attend, and were required to take a breathalyzer test given by probation officers before the presentation began. If a person did not pass the test, they were not allowed to attend. At the end of the VIP, participants were required to fill out a survey and an evaluation form reflecting what they had learned from the presentation before receiving a certificate.

The first presentation called, “Alcohol and Drugs 101,” was given by Rev. Thomas LeBeau. Rev. LeBeau, who is also a Registered Nurse, talked about losing his son to a drug overdose. Participants learned about how alcohol and drugs are metabolized in the body and how they impair judgment. It was followed by a video of young people who were recovering from drug and alcohol addiction, showed CAT scans of healthy and injured brains, and gave approaches to having a healthier lifestyle.

During the second half of the VIP, people who were impacted by DWI spoke about their experiences. Kevin James spoke about the “ripple effect” of crime. He was hit by a drunk driver while he was waiting at a stop sign. The driver rear-ended his car, causing Mr. James to hit the car in front of him. The impact of the crash resulted in Mr. James getting a whiplash and back injury, from which he has yet to recover. In addition to the physical injury, he lost his car, became unemployed, and continues to pay high medical bills.

The final speaker was Dave Allen, who had lost his son to a drunk driver. Mr. Allen told his story about his son, David, who had just graduated from the Air Force Academy. His son had a promising future, but his life ended too soon. David went to visit a friend at a party, and he had been warned not to get in the car with his friend—especially if he had been drinking. Despite this warning, he accepted the ride, and shortly after, his friend lost control of the car and crashed. Mr. Allen’s son died at the scene of the accident. His friend survived.

Each presenter talked about their grief and how they must relive the tragedy day after day. It highlighted the fact that we are interconnected, and there are consequences for making poor decisions. Their message, however, was also one of empowerment and hope. If participants can learn from their mistakes, make better choices, and prevent these tragedies from happening again, then the VIP will have accomplished its purpose.

For more information about the Victim Impact Panel, please contact Ameen Aswad, Case Manager, at (607) 432-0061.



From the Program Director

Greetings Mediators!

I have been working with the Dispute Resolution Center for five years now. I have had mediator training and practice reflections on myself and the things that I do daily. Upon reflection, I often think—I should have said this or I should have done that—like I believe most of us do. There is one thing that I look at harshly and am very hard on myself about - a missed opportunity! I believe in mediation and its power to promote deeper understanding and richer communication. When I process and reflect on the conversations I have with my children or with people I work with, I can see a missed opportunity. I am also trying to look for the instances where I used the tools of the trade. I think it is important for growth and development for all of us to be reflective of the things we do, the things we say and how we react to different situations. I think reflections should be honest, not overly chastising or praising. Give yourself credit for what you did well and be honest when there is work to be done on something. In addition to being a wonderful way to grow and develop, it will help you set goals for yourself and to get to know yourself better.

Catholic Charities Dispute Resolution Center asks our mediators to practice reflection during mediation with parties and during debriefing with co-mediators. We also require each mediator to complete a self-evaluation form and submit it to us annually after having participated in a mediation. The completed form will get you an hour of training, as that is approximately how long it will take you to really be reflective in your answers to the questions. The form will be sent to you periodically throughout the year so that you can complete it one time between January 1

and December 31. You can also receive a form by requesting one from any staff member. I am hopeful that you will take this task as an opportunity for growth as a mediator and not just another box that needs to be checked off.

We also provide feedback by observing each of our mediators annually. Program staff will come and observe one or both mediators during a mediation. Feedback will be discussed with the mediators. In addition to the self-evaluation and the observation, I believe you are aware that you must mediate a minimum of three cases and take a minimum of six hours of training. There are a lot of ways for you to get training credits, contact any staff person for more details.

For quality assurance, it is important for all of these pieces to be completed annually to keep your mediator skills sharp. If you are unable to complete everything required to remain Certified with the program, please call the staff and have a conversation with them. We try very hard to be creative and flexible where possible. We appreciate the work done by the volunteers and believe that your offerings to the program make the program stronger.

Christy Houck

Divorce Mediation Update

Hello to all Divorce Mediators!

Just to let you know that the poverty level is now \$12,061 and the self-support reserve is \$16,061. I'm making the changes in our documents to reflect this.

If you have any question, please contact John Graham at (607) 432-0061, ext.114



Save the Date!

- **“Agreement Writing: Using the Laptop”** In-service Training for Fulton, Montgomery, & Schoharie County Volunteer Mediators. Learn how to use the laptop to write agreements and become familiarized with our new forms. Mediators will need to attend just one session. Please R.S.V.P. April Rando, arando@charitiesccdo.org by June 7th .

Session 1: June 9th , 2:00 p.m.-4:00 p.m., Catholic Charities,
1 Kimball St., Amsterdam

Session 2: June 16th, 2:00 p.m.-4:00 p.m., Catholic Charities,
489 W. Main St., Cobleskill



Everyone is invited to write articles that would be of interest to mediators. If you have something you would like to share for the newsletter, please email your article by Wednesday, June 21st to April Rando at arando@charitiesccdo.org. Thank you!

Thrift Shop News by Allison Briggs

On Saturday, May 6th, the Catholic Charities Thrift Shop hosted a Spring Festival in our Cobleskill location. The weather wasn't great, but the festival went off without a hitch. We had a table run by Allison Briggs and Sally Mclean that had agency brochures, pamphlets and free giveaways. SUNY Cobleskill students provided face painting and kid's games, and the Thrift Shop had lots of great deals on clothing and in store specials. We also had drinks, snacks and hot dogs for sale which everybody really seemed to enjoy!

In other news: Catholic Charities client choice Food Pantry has received a grant from Jazzy's Place, which allows us to provide dog food for food pantry clients. We are thrilled about this! Pets are members of the family and should be treated as such. We are proud to serve individuals and families in need as well as their fur-ever friends!



Mediation Around the World: Japan *“Learning from Japan: The Case for Increased Use of Apology in Mediation, by Max Bolstad, Cleveland State Law Review, 2000 (Article summary by April Rando)*

An apology is given when there has been a breach in the rules of social interaction and a party has been harmed. However, not all apologies are the same. The manner in which an apology is given and how well an apology is received is influenced by the social norms of a particular culture. In the United States, the apology is very rarely used in mediation or litigation. In Japan, however, the apology is expected, and plays an important role in social interactions. In “Learning from Japan: The Case for Increased Use of Apology in Mediation,” Max Bolstad highlights the differences and nuances of the apology in American and Japanese cultures, and how the apology could be a transformative experience for both the offender and the offended.

To read the research paper, go to: <http://engagedscholarship.csuohio.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1454&context=clevstlrev>



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



Ameen Aswad, Case Manager: My journey with Catholic Charities began on April 5, 2010. These past seven years have been very rewarding for me. I believe that God opened the door for me to work with this agency. What I do here is not a job but a ministry because I have been given the wonderful opportunity to impact many lives. I serve as the Case Manager for the Otsego County Adult Treatment Court. I assist those individuals and their families that are assigned to me in getting the needed services so they can focus solely on their recovery. I also view my role as an encourager. I do my best with God's help to let those I see know that they have what it takes to make it through this program and that I will be there encouraging them along the way.

I also coordinate the Victim Impact Panels in Chenango, Delaware and Otsego counties. Six times a year my team and I get to share about the dangers of driving while under the influence of drugs and alcohol to those who have been court mandated to attend. They also get to hear from family members who were impacted by losing a loved one from a crash that was a result of someone driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol. The feedback we get for the most part has been very positive.

The last program I oversee is Alternatives to Incarceration. This is a program of community service. Individuals are court ordered to see me and I do my best to link them up with a worksite that best matches their skills and abilities. This program has a 95% successful completion rate. I never know when I leave my home at 7:30 am every morning whom God is going to bring in my office that I can assist and encourage. If I had to do it all over again I would change nothing. Thank you Catholic Charities for allowing me to serve here.



Phillip "Phil" Hill, Mediator: The Dispute Resolution Center of Chenango, Delaware, and Otsego Counties (DRCCDO) had a flier in the passage way to the parking garage in Oneonta announcing a new Basic Mediation Training for the Spring of 2006. I had no idea what mediation entailed. I wrote down some information and went home to look it up on the Internet. What I read on the Internet was intriguing. At the training, I met a case manager who had cases referred from the bench by the family court judge on a regular

basis. I began attending court once or twice a month to gain experience and work with some of the more experienced mediators at that time. A couple of years later, I moved to western New York State for about a year and a half. During that time, I mediated in Allegany County and Steuben County. Each was a separate judicial district and transformative mediation training was required by the Rochester Center.

In 2009, I was offered a seat in agricultural divorce mediation training led by Dan Burns and Charlotte Carter. I have taken several other specialty trainings such as Parent-Child, Special Education, Transformative Mediation, and ACCESS-VR (adult vocational rehab) as well as the yearly single day trainings. I have mediated in Chenango, Delaware, and Schoharie Counties. Currently, most of the cases I do are divorce. A couple of years ago I began doing the information sessions for the divorce program in the three counties of DRCCDO. After being asked several times to serve on the board of directors for Catholic Charities of Delaware, Otsego, and Schoharie Counties, I joined in 2013. Shortly thereafter, I participated in the merger of Delaware and Otsego with the Schoharie agency and currently serve as the board president.

Currently, a full-time MBA student at Sage Colleges of Albany, I am looking for a Business Administration-Organizational Management PhD program for the fall of 2018. I would love to combine my former clinical experience in large medical centers with business and mediation, focusing on conflict within healthcare.

I love that mediation empowers the participants to represent themselves and find their own solution to their conflict. The different techniques and practices used in mediation have given me some new tools that can be utilized in almost any aspect of my life. I am very directive in most areas of my life so mediation offers a change of perspective and a different role. Having done both solo mediation and co-mediation, I prefer co-mediation for the different abilities each mediator brings to the table. The wide range of backgrounds and life experiences of the mediators at DRCCDO is fascinating, ensuring trainings are never dull. As much as I usually enjoy mediating it is the people, from the staff to the other mediators that keep me interested and involved. The participants invite us into their lives to assist them with their conflict and my fellow mediators have often invited me into their lives.

WANTED: VOLUNTEERS! Do you know someone who might be interested in becoming a volunteer mediator or a volunteer translator? Please contact Christy Houck, DRC Program Director at chouck@charitiesccdo.org