



Community Dispute Resolution Center
Serving Chemung, Schuyler & Tompkins Counties
Winter 2008

CDRC Welcomes New Board Members!

Rita Gould
*NY Connect & Adult Services
Supervisor
Chemung County Office
for the Again & Long Term Care*

Paul Hart
*Attorney
Hart Law Office*

Seth Hiland
*Attorney
Sayles & Evans*

Sue Perlcut
*Independent Film Producer
ClosetoHome Productions*

Rita Tague- Carmony
*RNBS CPC
Schuyler Hospital
Utilization Review Case
Management Director*

25 Years... and Still Talking!

◆ This year marks the 25th anniversary of the Community Dispute Resolution Center, which has served Tompkins County since 1983 and Chemung and Schuyler Counties since 1997. CDRC has decided to celebrate in style during three separate events – one in each of our counties.

Our three events are meant to be festive, and laud the achievements borne of 25 years of tireless work and dedication to the simple idea that “talk works”. So, what would be more appropriate in a CDRC celebration than to keep on talking? Our first event on March 4th takes us to the new Schuyler County Human Services Building, where we will mingle with our Schuyler community of citizens and legislators, snack on hors d’oeuvres and, with Schuyler Cooperative Extension and the Environmental Management Council, facilitate a conversation on land use we’re calling “Facing the Challenges of Growth Together”.

On April 23rd, in Chemung County, our focus shifts to celebrating the wonderful community of youth we are privileged to work with. At the Wings of Eagles Discovery Center we will

recognize our Kid Talk and Teen Talk programs and the teen mediators we have trained.

Our very special guest will be Carl Hayden, much-admired Chancellor Emeritus of the New York State Board of Regents.

Our final event will take place where it all began, in Tompkins County. We will gather for a gala celebration with the renowned Dr. William Thomas, founder of the Eden Alternative, whose core belief is that “aging should be a continued stage of development and growth, rather than a period of decline. The Eden Alternative is seeking to remake the experience of aging around the world” through their work in de-institutionalizing the care of elders in homes and long-term care facilities. We will also celebrate our local elder community and the participants of our Wise Talk program.

In the coming days we will be sending more information and save-the-date cards. We hope you will join us for any or all of these events. Your support has been integral to our success and longevity and we are so grateful, so join us in the conversation as we

celebrate:
25 years...
and still
talking!



Community Dispute Resolution Center

CDRC

talk works.



Community Conversations

◆ One part of my job that I particularly enjoy is helping large groups of people have conversations. It's relatively easy for two people to have a conversation, and even five or six people generally do well, especially when there's not a lot of tension or much at stake. But as the numbers and concerns grow, it can get much harder to converse. That's where CDRC's facilitation services come in.

Over the years, I've facilitated dozens of meetings, some with twenty people in the room and some with 200 people in the room. Sometimes I just come and help whomever is there discuss what they need to, which is what happened less than a month ago when over 80 residents of Mecklenburg gathered to talk about the use of sludge on the fields of one local family of farmers. Just before going to press with this newsletter, we were told that the family had decided to discontinue use of this product, given the concerns expressed by their neighbors, showing us once again how well talk works.

Sometimes the processes CDRC helps with are lengthier: I've worked with colleagues to design and facilitate public participation processes that went on for more than a year – like the trans-

portation study done in 1998 for the Ithaca-Tompkins County Transportation Council. Four of us assisted the staff of the Finger Lakes National Forest in assessing the public's opinion of the forest and involving people in their land management plan revisions during 2003 and 2004.

What all these meetings and processes have in common is that they provide opportunities for large numbers of people from businesses or organizations, neighborhoods or municipalities, to engage with one another productively around issues of concern. As our communities grow and diversify, we need these structured ways for individuals to weigh in with their perspectives and ideas. This, in turn, informs elected officials and others who have decision-making authority. It not only stimulates creative problem-solving but fosters our sense of democracy, as well.

We're so proud of CDRC's facilitation, in fact, that our first-of-three anniversary events will provide an example of this kind of community conversation. On March 4 (March 18 if it snows!), CDRC, in cooperation with local agencies and government, are hosting a community conversation: "Facing



the Challenges of Growth Together”.

The evening will allow Schuyler County residents to think about land use issues they face, and respond to questions about life in Schuyler County as well as weigh in on what they would like to see as the county grows and changes. Those present will gather to share their perspectives, after which the information will go back to the county, local governments and the participating agencies as they consider ways to effectively plan for growth in the county.

Whether or not you live in Schuyler County, all are welcome to join us and see how large groups of people can constructively discuss difficult issues. Come celebrate CDRC's work in Schuyler, and through our 25 years! Our involvement helps keep a group's goals in sight and their conversation on track. *Talk works* – and we help those who put the time and energy into participating to understand how their talk will lead to action.

Highlights from CDRC's Youth Programs

◆ CDRC's Teen Talk, Kid Talk and Peer Mediation programs continue to grow as the agency heads into its 25th year. We couldn't be more excited at the prospects for the future and the potential the kids we work with have shown.

The South Seneca schools, with training assistance from CDRC's Youth Services component, are implementing a new peer mediation program. Six students have already completed the necessary training and hope to begin mediating student disputes soon. In addition, a number of faculty and staff have attended training in order to familiarize themselves with the peer mediation process and philosophy.

Twenty-one students from the Elmira City School District's Alternative Middle School Program have completed a full series of Teen Talk programming. Students attended 8 one-hour sessions and are letting us know how empowered they feel knowing now how to respond

to conflict in ways that work. Also in Chemung, student members of the Elmira Youth Court have completed special conflict training for its members. An impressive 42 students have learned about how people tend to respond when in conflict and what they can do to help promote a positive shift in defendant behavior.

Family School Conferencing is another initiative being offered through our Youth Services. This provides an opportunity for families to come together with school personnel, and, on occasion, youth services agencies, using a strengths-based approach in addressing concerns such as truancy and behavior, and together develop goals and next steps. The Conferences can be used in various ways: before filing a PINS petition, as truancy prevention, or as an alternative to a superintendent conference hearing. CDRC currently also facilitates Pre-PINS Family School

Conferences with the Newfield School District.

We were extremely pleased to get a special request from a group of students at Broadway Middle School. Interested in managing their conflicts more constructively, they will begin a series of eight Teen Talk sessions in February. And along with everything else that Elmira youth is participating in, we are looking forward to something new: a video project with youth from the New Day after-school program at Beecher Elementary. Students will work with a professional videographer as well as CDRC's youth program staff to write, produce and star in a video that will model appropriate conflict response skills. Watch for the world premiere this spring at our 25th Anniversary event in Chemung County! We'll be at the Wings of Eagles Discovery Center on the 23rd of April, from 4–6pm, so come on out to celebrate with us and bring your favorite kids!

Wise Talk Keeps Talking!

Program Update; 18 months
January, 2008

◆ Three adult siblings and their aging parent met for four mediation sessions recently to discuss some major areas of concern regarding the family farm and estate, future living plans for the parent and that dreaded conversation around if and when their octogenarian parent should stop driving. Though it was a long and difficult conversation, it ended with some very positive outcomes.

According to one participant:

"The mediation sessions have helped to crystallize things and move things along. It was really a turnaround for our family. The mediators were exceptional!"

In another case, adult siblings, who had just lost their remaining parent, gathered to discuss the settling of the estate. Different siblings had different ideas, and emotions ran high. With the guidance of the mediator, the siblings were able to express their individual feelings and come to certain agreements. As one of the parties said about the session:

"On behalf of me and all my siblings, thanks for your kind, caring and expert mediation work. We could not have done it without you. The rest of our weekend went very well, and you helped lay a foundation for that good work."

At the conclusion of 2007, Wise Talk opened 36 cases, mediated 23 sessions and helped 175 people. The largest number of referrals (10) came from the Department of Social Services' Adult Protective Services Unit. Included among the other referral agencies were the Office for the Aging, Hospicare, the Tompkins County Health Department, Family and Children's Services, Kendal at Ithaca, Merrill Lynch, Tompkins Trust Company and Lifelong.

Evelyn Kalish, Social Worker at Kendal at Ithaca writes of Wise Talk:

"In my role as a social worker, I am grateful when a different approach is available to help resolve difficult situations. I remember one case with a family that brought up painful old issues in the course of trying to work

through the one at hand. Wise Talk was the key resource in allowing this family to confront and address that issue. Wise Talk has proven to be an invaluable resource to Kendal at Ithaca."

CDRC's meticulous attention to the Needs Assessment process, so well facilitated by CDRC staff and widely participated in by community members and Aging Services professionals alike, resulted in a highly useful valuation document that is now regularly requested by, and provided to, dispute resolution centers all across the country.

And Wise Talk continues to grow and develop.

CDRC's staff has lately begun to expand the program in collaboration with the Office for the Aging in Chemung County. The aging services network there has been very responsive to the program and its potential as a resource for the elderly, their families and service providers. Workshops, In-Services and Talk Works Players presentations are all being scheduled throughout the county as we begin to network and listen to the needs of that community. An April Wise Talk Mediator training has been scheduled as well. If you're interested in taking part, contact our Elmira office at 607-734-9087.

CDRC is also now beginning to recruit "CDRC Community Liaisons" from within the senior adult residential communities, faith communities and meal sites throughout Tompkins County. These senior adult liaisons will receive a Wise Talk orientation, after which they will be invited to act as CDRC's "ears" in their community, suggesting mediation to their peers where appropriate and making referrals.

As we head into 2008, we foresee a very productive and energizing year for the Wise Talk program, which continues to grow and help more and more of our community's senior adults, and their families and care-givers.



Judy Saul, Lynne Jackier, Martha Robertson

THE 11TH ANNUAL MLK, JR. PEACEMAKER AWARD

◆ This year's Martin Luther King, Jr. Peacemaker award was presented to Lynne Jackier, retired Director of the Drop-In Children's Center here in Ithaca. It was one of many exciting events at the Eleventh Annual MLK Day Celebration. In presenting this award to her friend, nominator Martha Robertson, a board member of CDRC, and a Tompkins County legislator, stated some of the many reasons Ms. Jackier deserved such recognition.

"Lynne created a culture of inclusion that warmly welcomed low-income and traditionally under-served children as well as top-fee-paying families. The resulting multicultural, child-centered environment helped all to thrive." An aspect of Lynne's inclusiveness that particularly stands out was her initiative to hire a diverse staff based on attributes other than degree or experience, and to have them learn valuable teaching skills on the job. The Center then provided tuition assistance for these staff in earning their Early Childhood Associate degrees at TC3.

During her 15 years as Director of the Drop-in Center, Lynne enriched our community in many ways. These included offering staff a living wage, benefits, and a conflict resolution process to resolve differences; offering families a low-cost means to have their children looked after by capable and sensitive individuals as they went to their jobs and schools; and offering a multi-cultural arena where children learned to appreciate the differences of those around them. In the words of Martin Luther King, Jr. that are engraved on her plaque, "The hope of a secure and livable world lies with disciplined nonconformists who are dedicated to justice, peace and brotherhood." Lynne is certainly such a person. We congratulate her on all her success!

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YES, I believe that *talk works!*

Your gift supports CDRC...

- \$500 trains a community volunteer to mediate
- \$250 supports a workshop on conflict for teens
- \$100 supports the Talk Works Players
- \$50 supports one hour of advanced mediator training

Enclosed is my tax-deductible gift to CDRC, 120 W. State St., Ithaca, NY 14850 –OR– Please charge \$_____ to my

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EXP. DATE

THANK YOU!

A birthday is a great opportunity for gift-giving. If you're not already participating in CDRC's annual fund-raising campaign, consider a generous gift this year, to help us mark our 25th. Those of you who are already regular donors will be hearing from us soon about some exciting new opportunities to make your gift count. We're proud that we've been promoting constructive responses to conflict since 1983 and your support will help to ensure that this important work continues. Join the many community members whose donations allow us to celebrate:

25 Years ... and Still Talking!

Bridges is going paperless!

CDRC will be cutting down on paper usage, waste and printing costs by offering our newsletter in electronic form to those who are interested. If you would like us to add your name to this list, please send an e-mail to cdrc@cdrc.org from the address you'll want us to use, and put "subscribe" in the subject line. Please be sure to include your full name in the body of the email, and an alternate way to contact you, (phone or mail), just in case.

FOR YOUR INFO...

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