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Professionals Committed to Cooperative Conflict Resolution

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Our Mission

The Maine Association of Mediators is a nonprofit organization of diverse professional interests seeking to broaden public understanding and acceptance of alternative forms of dispute resolution. The Association strives to enhance professional skills and qualifications of mediators, arbitrators, and other neutrals through training, educational development and promotion of standards of professional conduct.

Submission deadline for
July issue:
June 15, 2012

FMI: MAMBulletin@aol.com

The President's Message

By Peter J. Malia, Jr.

In the unceasing effort to provide members of the Maine Association of Mediators, interested professionals and community members with the highest quality continuing mediation education available, the Board of Governors and its committees are pleased to present a day-long, informative, star studded seminar on Thursday, May 10, 2012 at the Hilton Garden Inn in Freeport.

The day starts with a much-anticipated and timely keynote address delivered by Maine's Center for Preventing Hate founding director **Steve Wessler** entitled "Civility in Professional and Personal Discourse." After a coffee break, the morning will conclude with your choice of three workshops: Elder Mediation, with **Stacey Mondschein Katz, Denis Culley, Will Van Twisk** and **Anne Martin**; Employment Mediation with **Maria Fox, Elizabeth Marcus, Glenn Israel, Amy Sneirson, Ericka Gray** and **Frank Fallon**; and Special Education Mediation with **Sheila Mayberry, Karen Farber** and **Michael Opuda**.

After lunch, we are very pleased to offer attendees a plenary training session presented by **Ericka Gray** and **Melinda Gehris** entitled "Adapting Mediation Skills to Interpersonal Conflict Intervention." This session is not to be missed. Ms. Gray and Ms. Gehris will explore challenging employment issues in healthcare (with patients and other employees), as well as in other professional venues. This session is designed to improve the mediator's skills in managing difficult personalities and to introduce the lay attendee to the goals and values of mediation in general and in interpersonal conflicts in particular.

For those interested in spending the night at the Hilton Garden Inn, we have arranged for a special room rate available until May 3 (\$129.00 plus tax). Call 207-865-1433 and ask for the "MAM Block Rate." We look forward to seeing members on May 10 for a great day of networking and skill enhancing seminars and to welcoming other professionals and community members with an interest in learning more about mediation from professional mediators.

Grant-sponsored Mediator assists parties for Maine Human Rights Commission

Rebekah Smith, a Maine lawyer and mediator, has been awarded a Flom Incubator Grant from the Skadden Fellowship Foundation to conduct mediations for low-income and unrepresented parties involved in actions before the Maine Human Rights Commission (Commission). Ms. Smith, who conducted a two-year Skadden Fellowship beginning in 2000 representing low-income families in impact litigation and in administrative and legislative arenas, has a practice focus on mediation, arbitration and administrative hearing officer work. She is also a Policy Fellow at the Margaret Chase Smith Policy Center at the University of Maine, which is administering the grant. When the Flom Incubator Grants were made available to former Skadden Fellows last year, Ms. Smith submitted a proposal to increase mediation services to individuals who might not otherwise be able to utilize such options.

Amy Sneirson, Executive Director of the Commission, states that “because the goal of the Commission is ultimately to resolve disputes, we place a strong emphasis on conciliation and mediation processes to help parties reach resolution. We are thrilled to work with Rebekah Smith as she implements this grant, which will support our efforts to expand the possibilities for resolution at all stages of Commission proceedings.” In conjunction with those efforts, the Commission recently hired former Portland mayor and councilor **Jill Duson** as Compliance Manager. The compliance manager is responsible for oversight of all resolution processes and undertakes the Commission’s public education outreach.

The Commission’s charge is to enforce Maine’s anti-discrimination laws, primarily the Maine Human Rights Act. Last year, 764 charges of discrimination were filed before the Commission. Over three-quarters of the claims were employment-based with housing and public accommodation cases comprising most of the balance. Approximately two-thirds were claims of discrimination were based on disability, sex, and whistle-blower retaliation. Other categories of alleged discrimination included race, sexual orientation, age and national origin. Although legal services organizations do represent parties before the Commission, approximately half of all parties are unrepresented.

With the Flom Incubator Grant, Ms. Smith will provide mediation services in approximately forty Commission cases involving unrepresented and low-income litigants. In particular, cases that are in the process of investigation and have not yet received a ruling by the Commission will be selected for mediation. **David Webbert**, president of the Maine Employment Lawyers Association, frequently represents people who bring discrimination claims before the Commission. Mr. Webbert said that “this expansion of options for early ADR with professional mediators will promote the speedy and just resolution of these very important cases.” **Stephen Langsdorf**, partner at Preti Flaherty who concentrates on the representation of businesses and municipalities, supported the Commission’s mediation program because “early mediation is critical to the successful operation of the Commission process.” Mr. Langsdorf suggested that a mediation option within the first six months of filing could decrease the backlog of cases such that the Commission process would not be simply a delay before filing suit but would fulfill its function of resolving cases.

For more information on Skadden grants, see www.skaddenfellowships.org. Ms. Smith can be reached at rsmith52@roadrunner.com

What's ahead, MAM?

MAY 1 Tuesday in Lewiston, ME

Annual Foreclosure Diversion Program (FDP) Training for FDP roster members

Sponsored by the Administrative Office of the Courts-Maine

FMI: laura.pearlman@courts.maine.gov

MAY 2 Wednesday in Springvale, ME

Annual Foreclosure Diversion Program Training for FDP roster members

Sponsored by the Administrative Office of the Courts-Maine

FMI: laura.pearlman@courts.maine.gov

MAY 3 Thursday in Bangor, ME

Annual Foreclosure Diversion Program Training for FDP roster members

Sponsored by the Administrative Office of the Courts-Maine

FMI: laura.pearlman@courts.maine.gov

MAY 3-5, 18-19 Thursday-Friday-Saturday, Friday-Saturday in Topsham, ME

Training for Mediation with VOANNE certificate (40 hours)

Sponsored by Volunteers of America Northern New England (VOANNE)

FMI: Nancy Markowitz, 373-1140 ext.229, mediate@voanne.org

MAY 3,4,11, 18 Thursday and three consecutive Fridays in Portland, ME

Training for Family Law and Divorce Mediation (26 hours)

Sponsored by the University of Southern Maine (USM) Professional Development Programs

FMI: 207-780-5900

MAY 10 Thursday, Hilton Garden Inn, Freeport, ME

Spring Conference: Using Conflict Management to Achieve Civility

Maine Association of Mediators (MAM)

FMI: administrator@mainemediators.org

JUNE 1 Friday, Portland, ME

Training for Mediation and Domestic Violence (8 hours)

Sponsored by the University of Southern Maine (USM) Professional Development Programs

FMI: 207-780-5900

JUNE 6 Wednesday in Portland, ME

Annual Foreclosure Diversion Program Training for FDP roster members

Sponsored by the Administrative Office of the Courts-Maine

FMI: laura.pearlman@courts.maine.gov

JUNE 17-18 Friday-Saturday, Brandeis University, Waltham, MA

NE-ACR regional conference: Conflict Resolution from the Inside Out

Sponsored by Northeast region of the Association for Conflict Resolution(NE-ACR)

FMI: chris-causey@hotmail.com or visit www.neacr.org

OTHER For information on Transformative Mediation training sponsored by Youth Alternatives Ingraham, contact Karen Groat at 207-632-1111 or email Karen.Groat@opportunityalliance.org

Coming from away...

MAM's conference committee reports to the BULLETIN that it is proud and pleased so many prominent Maine-based professionals agreed to present at the MAM spring conference on Thursday, May 10. Equally exciting is that two New Hampshire-based, long time trainers and practitioners will visit that day. To begin their introduction to Maine folks, below is just a short history of the work they have done or continue to do that makes us greatly honored to host them as afternoon presenters at the conference.

Melinda Gehris is a founding partner in Hess Gehris Solutions. She focuses her practice on dispute resolution, training and coaching. Her interest in mediation began early and she describes herself as a conciliator at heart. Ms. Gehris has been mediating since 1994 and regularly mediates and arbitrates for private parties. She also mediates for the New Hampshire Probate and Superior Courts, the federal court system, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and the New Hampshire Human Rights Commission. Ms. Gehris is an experienced trainer, developing and leading programs in dispute resolution from basic mediation skills to advanced, and specialized dispute resolution training and negotiation. She has also written and published several articles on dispute resolution topics and been named to Woodward and White's *Best Lawyers in America* since 2007 in dispute resolution. Ms. Gehris has been appointed to several New Hampshire court committees focusing on dispute resolution matters. She is past-president of the New Hampshire Association for Conflict Resolution, and a member of the New Hampshire Bar Association's Dispute Resolution Committee. Ms. Gehris teaches alternative dispute resolution courses at the University of New Hampshire School of Law. She received a J.D. from Northeastern University School of Law and also earned a Certificate in Dispute Resolution from the University of Massachusetts.

Ericka B. Gray is the founder of DisputEd, providing a full range of assessment, consulting, intervention, training, and coaching services designed to prevent, manage, and resolve conflict and difficult issues. She has been a professional mediator since 1985 and has served as the founding executive director of the Middlesex Multi-Door Courthouse, director of Professional Services, senior mediator and regional training coordinator for the Boston office of JAMS (formerly Judicial Arbitration and Mediation Services) and also previously for Endispute. Ms. Gray has taught mediation at Boston College Law School since 1992 and at Suffolk University Law School in Boston since 2000. She also teaches mediation and other conflict resolution courses at Northwestern University in Chicago. Ms. Gray previously served as the executive director of the Academy of Family Mediators, was on the board of directors of the New England chapter of the Association for Conflict Resolution (ACR) and has served on its leadership council for the workplace section. She was the first to hold advanced practitioner status in both the workplace and family sections of ACR. Ms. Gray previously served on the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court's standing committee on dispute resolution and is actively involved in a variety of dispute resolution legislative efforts.

Invitation to the Maine Association of Mediators 2012 Spring Conference

“When the Professional Becomes Personal: Using Conflict Management to Achieve Civility”

Date: Thursday, May 10, 2012 Check In: 8:30 am* Program: 9:15 am to 3:30 pm

Place: Hilton Garden Inn, Freeport, Maine

Featured Speakers: Steve Wessler, Melinda Gehris, Ericka Gray

Panelists: Denis Culley, Frank Fallon, Karen Farber, Maria Fox, Glenn Israel, Stacey Mondschein Katz, Elizabeth Marcus, Anne Martin, Sheila Mayberry, Michael Opuda, Amy Sneirson, Will Van Twisk

Cost: MAM members \$75; Non-Members \$115; full-time student \$50

Please visit www.mainemediators.org to register before or by Saturday, May 5.

****PreRegistration is required for luncheon and workshop choices.***

*** CLE Credits Have Been Applied For ***

Contact MAM

Maine Association of Mediators
P.O. Box 8187
Portland, ME 04104
mainemediators.org
1-877-265-9712

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Lisa Fourré, Administrator
administrator@mainemediators.org



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