



Member Newsletter November-December 2018

EXECUTIVE MEETINGS

The IAM executive committee met on November 2nd with quite a bit to discuss. The Heartland Conference is coming together, and we will make certain that you receive updates as soon as we have them. We have a CLE training opportunity coming up that is sponsored by MSEI and open to mediators statewide. Your executives are working on creating an event to revitalize eastern Iowa mediators, and we are tentatively thinking of holding that event on January 11. We are also excited to be working on ways to hone the organization's focus and collaborate with other organizations around the state. The next executive meeting is December 14, so contact your local executive member with any ideas, feedback, or concerns, or if you want to get more involved. You may also email your IAM Vice President, David Reedy, at david-reedy@hotmail.com or call 319.558.8985.

DUES ARE DUE

Your IAM annual association dues are coming due again in January. These fees help cover upcoming training opportunities, conferences like the Heartland Conference, guest speakers like Larry Dressler whom we hosted this past spring, and upcoming plans for more advocacy. As such, we appreciate your membership and look forward to an exciting year. You may pay your annual dues through the website here: <http://bit.ly/2AnJcMP>.

TRAININGS & EVENTS

Mediation in the Wild: New Options, New Practices: Mediation Services of Eastern Iowa is hosting its fall conference in Swisher, Iowa on Friday, November 30, 2018. Six hours of CLE credit have been requested. This conference promises to be interesting and applicable as it covers several issues, including business-related conflict and how it is handled by a variety of professions, civil rights and fair housing issues, restorative justice, and ways to integrate additional practices and techniques into your own practice. Cost ranges from \$50-\$135. For more information and to register: <http://bit.ly/2yTIW8g>.

The Program on Negotiation at Harvard Law School regularly offers various negotiation trainings and seminars varying in length from a couple of hours to a few days. If you have any insight on them, send it to the editor. Meanwhile, they do offer a free newsletter as well as a slew of for-pay newsletters. www.pon.harvard.edu

Iowa State University Extension and Outreach offers a large variety of courses and public meetings, across the state of Iowa including finances of caregiving, tools for caregivers, entrepreneurial courses, courses for strengthening families, farmland leasing, non-profit management, and conflict resolution. While the site is not the most user-friendly or easy to navigate, there is a lot to be offered here. <http://bit.ly/2PNFMJ5>

Save the Date! May 2-3, 2019

The Biennial Heartland Conference will be held May 2-3, 2019 at the Mid-America Center in Council Bluffs. The speaker for this 1½ day conference is Katherine Miller with The Center for Understanding in Conflict (<http://understandinginconflict.org>). Ms. Miller's presentation is "Facilitating Conversations of Consequence – Advanced Mediation & Conflict Training" and will include two hours of ethics.

Date: May 2-3, 2019
Times: Thursday 1-5pm
Friday 8:30am – 4pm
Location: Mid-America Center
Council Bluffs, Iowa

Biography: Katherine Eisold Miller is an attorney practicing mediation and collaborative practice in Westchester County, NY. She has been practicing family law since 1987, first as a litigator and now exclusively outside the court system. She has taught family law at the White Institute and NYU, as well as with The Center for Understanding in Conflict, and lectures regularly on mediation and collaborative practice. She is a board member of the New York Association of Collaborative Professionals. The impact of Katherine's trainings brings accolades like:

"The program teaches more than just new skills..."

"This program has forever changed me as an individual...and will forever change the way I manage conflict, personally, and professionally."

Biennial Heartland Conference Car-Pooling and Cost-Sharing: As I thought to myself that I'd rather not drive my old beast across the state of Iowa, I realized there may be others who would also like to save on mileage and money. If anyone would like to inquire about carpooling, rooming together,

or otherwise combining resources, send me an email at david-reedy@hotmail.com. I've also created a post on the IAM Facebook page to create group discussion, found here: www.facebook.com/IowaAssociationMediators/.

Stay tuned as more information is available, including agenda, registration, continuing education hours, lodging, etc.

LOCAL MEDIATION NEWS

Kids First in Linn County

A memo went out indicating that parties in Linn County who have parenting or child-related issues can now go to Kids First for free mediation. So far, it is suggested that reduced-fee mediators assigned by the courts should refer low income parties to Kids First for free mediation and the mediator will still get "credit for the reduced fee assignment." They offer continued free sessions for crafting parenting plans. To refer someone, you may have them call 319-365-5437 or go to www.kidsfirstiowa.org/services/joint-parenting-sessions.

A few considerations... I have already referred someone, but I also fear there may be room for this to be abused or simply over-utilized at the detriment to local mediators and parent coordinators. Is the fear well-placed or misplaced? Will this take real and potential work away from other mediators and parent coordinators? Kids First is truly a great organization in this area, so there are no hard or questionable feelings here. As an independent mediator, I share the same concerns that several of our members shared on the survey – that it is very hard, and seemingly becoming harder, to get work as independent mediators, who are not also attorneys or therapists, as mediators not plugged into certain circles, etc. I think I speak for everyone when I

suggest we want more mediation for all of us, and more collaborative opportunities. I welcome dialogue on the topic and would gladly share it, as well.

Drake University's Robert D. and Billie Ray Center, and the University of Arizona's National Institute for Civil Discourse did a presentation, "Community Conversations: Strategies for Civil Discourse in Communities" in the downtown Cedar Rapids Public Library on August 23rd. Dozens were in attendance, most notably the Mayor of Cedar Rapids, Bradley Hart. The training was meant for the public and the event was contemporarily appropriate and disappointingly only 2 hours in length. The bare basics of conflict resolution, persuasion, negotiation, and interpersonal communication were presented with an absolutely positive focus on civil discourse on community issues. The presentations were given again in Carrol, Iowa on Sept 18 and in Des Moines, Iowa on Sept 25. A nationally focused program was also presented on Sept 26 in DC. Even though these events have passed, you can stay updated with the National Institute for Civil Discourse through their webpage here: <https://nicd.arizona.edu/>

EDITORIAL REMARKS

Setting the Table

There is an island in Scotland called *Eilean a' Chomhraidh*, The Island of Discussion. For 1500 years, reportedly, persons with differences have been placed on this island with nothing but cheese, whiskey and oatcakes, and they were not allowed to leave until their issue was settled. Supposedly, there has only been one murder in that area in the past 1500 years.

When I was new to mediation, my trainer emphasized the importance of "setting the table." For some mediators, this can mean

providing bottled water, and if safety allows, serving coffee or tea, and possibly a snack. Some also emphasize the power behind pouring the drinks and serving the food yourself. Likewise, breaking bread or simply sharing a meal, has been a stable and central tenet of human civilization, communication, and conflict-resolution since the beginning of time, as we know it.

In Christian rite, it is a familiar practice to receive communion, in the form of bread and wine that, on a variable spectrum of belief, represents a symbolic teaching imparted by Christ to actually *being* the body and blood of Christ. There is another story in the Bible surrounding loaves and fishes, where again, depending on one's perspective, may tell us of the power of sharing a table and sustenance with one another.

In Japanese culture, the tea ceremony involves elaborate ritual and honoring of the host's guests. The Japanese tea ceremony is regarded as a form of wabi-sabi, an aesthetic characterized by the intimacy of gathering together and the beauty of imperfection. Some tea pottery items might even be deliberately nicked to enhance their character and meditative value.

On a lighter and rather more literal note, if you haven't seen the video already, here is a YouTube video of a guy breaking up a fight with a pizza. <http://bit.ly/2Fb42DH>

Statistics show us that families that eat together tend to have better adjustment, manners, academic performance, and health. They eat better, experience lower risks of addictions, have fewer weight problems, learn how to better solve conflicts and compromise – the list goes on. (source: <http://bit.ly/2zCDdSV>)

In the last issue and also listed above in the news section, I reported about an event called “Community Conversations” sponsored by the Robert D. and Billie Ray Center. In this event, the hosts showed a video telling the story of Bob Vander Plaats, the director of the Christian conservative organization, *Family Leader*, and Donna Red Wing, director of *One Iowa*, a gay marriage equality organization. These polarized individuals started out as bitter political rivals, who came together to share coffee, and after establishing a regular routine of having coffee together, they recognized each other for the human beings they are. Neither one would change the other’s mind, but they did learn to respect each other’s opinions and better understand where they came from. You may read more from in these articles:

He saw her marriage as ‘Unnatural.’ She called him ‘bigoted.’ Now they hug.

<https://wapo.st/2F878bv>

Activists Vander Plaats, Red Wing Found Common Ground <http://bit.ly/2D91bIF>

In conclusion, I think these observations can tell us many things. For certain, remember to “set the table” for your mediations and negotiations. But, also, I think it reminds us of the power of engagement, of communing with one another. We are reminded “to promote peace” as Mother Teresa said, and to literally sit down and eat with our families and even extend that hospitality to those we may not initially consider inviting to our table. - David Reedy

NEXT ISSUE

It will be a few months before your next newsletter. It usually takes 2-3 months to collect and collate content and then turn it over to our media specialist, who within a couple of days makes it a lot prettier and gets it out to you. I will be taking some time off for the holiday season, while checking in to make sure you stay informed about upcoming events and meetings. So, don’t panic if you don’t see the newsletter for a few months. It’ll be back in your inbox before you know it!