

THE TEXAS RESOLUTION CONNECTION

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ADR IN PRACTICE...CAN'T PAY THE BILLS?

The holidays have drawn to a close and many people chose to pay for gifts for their friends and family through credit, not cash. But what happens when the bills start to pile in at the first of the year? Finances are stretched to the max, and there seems to be nowhere to turn. Creditors may threaten to repossess the car, and the mortgage is in default. Now what do you do?

This is a perfect situation for mediation. Most creditors do not want you to fall behind on payments and will gladly reconsider the terms of your loan during hard times. What they do not like is avoidance.

In this case, you may call us and request mediation. We will invite all of the parties involved in the situation and provide a neutral party to facilitate the discussion and consider alternatives to the current situation. Most of the time, mediation can be completed in a couple of hours.

For people who have nowhere else to turn in a debt situation and who do not want to damage their credit, we may be able to help. Businesses and individuals can request mediation, no matter what the issue. Just contact us for more information.

FROM THE DIRECTOR...WE ARE 21 YEARS YOUNG!

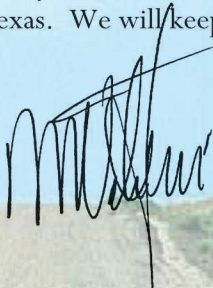
This past October, Dispute Resolution celebrated 21 years of service. In observance of this milestone, it is also important to reflect on how we got here. For those of you who do not know our history, here it is.

The Lubbock County Commissioners created an Alternative Dispute Resolution System in 1985. In 1988, we began receiving regular referrals from the District Attorney. Mandatory mediation for divorcing couples began in 1989. In 1991, Mediation for civil cases became mandatory, as well as moderated settlement conferences for County Court at Law cases. Since 1999 the scheduling order for all civil cases has included a mandatory mediation date.

The South Plains Association of Governments administered these services until 2003. At that time, Lubbock County assumed responsibility for operating the system and the various services it provides.

In 2000, Governor Bush appointed, and in 2004 Governor Perry reaffirmed, our ADR System to administer the USDA Mediation Program in Texas. In January 2006, Dispute Resolution officially became a Domestic Relations Office (DRO), providing family-related services. With the DRO designation, the Community Supervision program began in December of 2006.

This year our services will continue to expand to include more Alternative Dispute Resolution services to rural areas of Texas. We will keep you informed of our progress.



TEXAS AGRICULTURE LIFETIME LEADERS...

The twenty-four members of the Texas Agricultural Lifetime Leadership (TALL) Class X visited Lubbock during the first week of October and continued their educational journey through the Texas South Plains with a breakfast hosted by Texas Rural Mediation Services.



Crystal Stone (standing)

At the breakfast, Crystal Stone, Assistant Director of the Texas Dispute Resolution System, spoke about the benefits of the USDA Mediation Program. Additionally, she added that as current and future leaders of the Texas Agriculture industry, knowledge of the USDA Mediation program allows TALL class members to place another tool in their box of resources.

The TALL Program enables men and women from all aspects of the agricultural community to increase their knowledge about the various sectors of Texas agriculture, develop leadership skills, and put those skills into practice.

SOUTH TEXAS FARM AND RANCH SHOW VICTORIA...

Texas Rural Mediation Services sponsored a dinner at the South Texas Farm and Ranch Show in Victoria, TX, during late October. Approximately 200 guests, including County Commissioners, ranchers, and producers and their families, attended the dinner.

Dr. Jim Mazurkiewicz was the keynote speaker. He is a Professor and Extension Specialist for Leadership Programs as TALL Director for Texas Cooperative Extension, a member of The Texas A&M University System and its statewide Agriculture Program. Therefore, his experience fits well with TRMS.

DID YOU KNOW...

...that 216 Texas counties are not served by an Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) System...that 80% of the land in Texas is in some form of agricultural production...that Texas is the second-largest agriculture state in the United States, accounting for about 7% of the total U.S. agricultural income?

When producers and their families experience hardship, it is important to the community in which they live, to the State of Texas, and to the entire U.S. economy that they receive the assistance they require. Texas Rural Mediation Services provides assistance by way of a neutral party to resolve disputes. Mediators are located throughout the state and the fees for the service are minimal.

MEET THE STAFF...

Each issue we will focus on one of our staff members. This issue spotlights **Mark Hall, Outreach Field Representative III.**



Mark Hall

In November, Mark Hall was hired for program development. He will focus on how to grow our mediation, training and outreach programs.

As a Field Representative, Mark will be out of the office making contacts and meeting with officials on how our programs can meet the needs of other organizations and communities.

“Our programs can be applied to any situational conflict. The fact is that there are, and will be, conflicts in rural Texas and mediation is a valuable tool for addressing these conflicts,” says Hall. “Our program is accessible to anyone in Texas, but they have to know how our programs can solve their problems. And that’s where I come in.”

Mark came to us after serving as a Lubbock County Magistrate Judge for 7 1/2 years. He was also a practicing attorney for 23 years and graduated from Texas Tech University School of Law.

IN THE NEWS...

Texas Rural Mediation Services was featured in the December 5, 2006 edition of *The Eagle Land and Livestock Post*. An electronic copy of the article can be found at http://www.landandlivestockpost.com/stories/120506/news_20061205005.php.

Gene Valentini and Mark Hall attended a meeting as a member of the Interagency Workgroup on Rural Issues, held by the Office of Rural Community Affairs in Austin, Texas, December 12-13, 2006, to discuss and the current status of rural Texas. While in Austin, they met with key personnel to establish and refine the service goals for rural Texas.



Glen Provost (M) with class members

In September, Glen Provost presented “Elder Care: Are You Ready for Your Client’s Future” to a group of attorneys, judges and insurance agents in Brady, Texas as a part of

the Department’s outreach for rural Texas. The one-day continuing education seminar covered some important issues concerning the elder population in Texas. The majority of the group provided some form of service to elderly clients living in rural areas.

The Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services estimates that 5.6 million Baby Boomers live in Texas and that this elderly population will grow from 13% to 22% in the next 30 years. Therefore, the number of professionals assisting the elder population will increase as well.

The class looks in-depth at the mental, physical, and legal aspects of aging and how the aging process can legally affect clients and their families. Provost takes the participants on a journey through various stages of Alzheimer’s Disease, which has been proclaimed *the* disease of the 21st Century.

Dementia, lucidity, and mental capacity were also presented. Finally, Provost discussed the specific challenges faced when advocating for elderly clients so that when these issues arise, practitioners will be well prepared to competently handle the situation.

One attendee stated that the “combination of law, ethics, and practical considerations” was what he liked best about the seminar. Another “would recommend all judges receive instruction” about Alzheimer’s Disease. The positive response was so overwhelming that Provost has agreed to travel to other locations in rural Texas this year (see dates and locations listed to the right) with the same presentation. If you are interested in attending one of the trainings, please contact us.

CULTURAL DIVERSITY CONTINUING EDUCATION...

On November 4, 2006, Dispute Resolution mediators gathered for a Continuing Education (CE) workshop on how culture affects mediation and the process of mediation. Dr. Aretha Marbley, an Associate Professor in Educational Psychology and Leadership at Texas Tech University, instructed the group.

After some initial skepticism from the group concerning how culture affects the process of mediation, many of the mediators agreed that the workshop was helpful to know some of the cultural barriers to a successful and productive mediation.

Basic Mediation Training

March 19-23, El Paso, TX

April 16-20, Salado, TX

August 13-17, Lubbock, TX

September 17-21, Ruidoso, NM

October 15-19, Harlingen, TX

Parenting Coordinator Training

March 19-21, El Paso, TX

April 16-18, Salado, TX

August 13-15, Lubbock, TX

Family Mediation Training

June 11-14, Kerrville, TX

Property Tax Arbitration

April 10-13, Lubbock, TX

May 15-18, El Paso, TX

June 12-15, Kerrville, TX

CPS Mediation Training

March 22, El Paso, TX

June 14-15, Kerrville, TX

ADR Professional Continuing Education

CPS: Rescheduled to March 3, Lubbock, TX

Bankruptcy: September 7, Lubbock, TX

Legislative Review: September 8, Lubbock, TX

Healthcare: October 12, Lubbock, TX

Family/Juvenile: November 3, Lubbock, TX

Continuing Legal Education

Elder Law: March 9, Sherman, TX

Healthcare: March 30, Victoria, TX

Healthcare: April 27, Sherman, TX

Elder Law: May 10, College Station, TX

Elder Law: September 13, Vernon, TX

Healthcare: September 14, Vernon, TX

Elder Law: October 18, Harlingen, TX

Healthcare: October 19, Harlingen, TX

Healthcare: October 26, Lufkin, TX

Elder Law: November 2, Seminole, TX

Second Annual Symposium for Resolving Healthcare Disputes

October 12, Lubbock, TX

We also offer training sessions specifically tailored to your specifications. If you do not see a training topic or location that meets your needs, please contact our office and we will accommodate you as best we can.

A NEW SOLUTION TO AN OLD PROBLEM...

Parents with a child support obligation now have another incentive to keep their payments up to date. Through a contract with the Attorney General's Office, Dispute Resolution's Community Supervision Officer supervises non-custodial parents who have been found in contempt of a child support order. As with other supervision programs, this is court imposed and the penalty for non-compliance could result in jail time.

The program is designed to identify and reconcile the issues that prevent parents from making timely payments for the support of their children. Dispute Resolution began the service in December with assistance from the Texas Attorney General's Office, after approval by the Lubbock County Board of Judges and Lubbock County Commissioner's Court.

Once an individual is placed in the program, the Community Supervision Officer will assess the various reasons the parent has not made timely payments. The officer will refer and supervise attendance at recommended classes (such as life skills, job training, or parenting), monitor the status of child support payments, and take steps to increase collection of child support. This program is just one of the multitude of services offered under the Domestic Relations Office, which opened a year ago.

Although this program is based in Lubbock County, the office can provide these and other Alternative Dispute Resolution services to any interested party, including other county governments who request them.

2006 PEACE PIPE AWARD RECIPIENTS...



Gene Valentini (L)
and James Kitten (R)

At the December 28, 2006 Lubbock County Commissioner's Court meeting, Dispute Resolution Director Gene Valentini presented Commissioner James Kitten with the Judge William Shaver Peace Pipe Award. This award recognizes a strong and continued commitment to the advancement of the organization's Alternative Dispute Resolution activities.



Tom Cannon (L)
and Vice Chairman of
the Board Robert
Wilson (R)

The late Becky Cannon received the Extra Mile Peace Pipe Award on August 18, 2006 at the Lubbock County Bar Association Luncheon. Her husband Tom Cannon, former Lubbock County Court at Law Judge, attorney and mediator, accepted the award on her behalf.

Becky had served on the Dispute Resolution Advisory Board or a Committee of the board since 1987. Six of those years she acted as chair and continuously advocated for the expansion and use of mediation. She will be missed greatly.

DISPUTE RESOLUTION ADVISORY BOARD

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Chairman of the Board

Robert Wilson
Vice Chairman of the Board

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Les Hatch	Larry Spain
Rod Knott	John Zahn
Tom Mann	

This newsletter is published by the
Texas Dispute Resolution System™

Our Office Provides the Following Services:

- Family/Divorce Mediation
- Parenting Coordinator Referrals
- Community Supervision Program
- Social Studies
- Civil Mediation
- Criminal Mediation
- Law Enforcement Referrals
- Educational Institution Referrals
- Intergovernmental Referrals
- Healthcare Mediation Program
- USDA Agricultural Mediation Program
- Rural Mediation
- Basic Mediation Training
- Family Mediation Training
- Parenting Coordinator Training
- Property Tax Arbitration Training
- CPS Mediation Training
- Continuing Legal Education Workshops
- Continuing Education for ADR Professionals
- Customized Training

For more information about our services,
please contact us at:

Phone: (806) 775-1720 or 1-866-329-3522
Fax: (806) 775-1729
E-mail: drc@co.lubbock.tx.us
Web Site: www.co.lubbock.tx.us