President’s Message

Greetings,

As I move into my second term as President of this illustrious organization, I am excited to lead VMN as she celebrates the 30th anniversary of serving as a voice for mediators throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Thirty years ago, mediation was a little-known concept that was being used to resolve conflict in the business and family arena and a small group of mediators took up the gauntlet to help dispute resolution professionals navigate this new landscape; by forming the Virginia Mediation Network.

In 30 years, the mediation landscape has changed; it has become a more acceptable tool of resolving issues in a variety of arenas. We are now resolving real estate issues, human resources issues, restorative justice issues and medical issues. Mediation has now become a valuable instrument in the alternative dispute resolution toolbox, however for VMN to continue to serve as that viable voice for the dispute resolution community, we need members.

As we move into the holiday season and the upcoming New Year, I charge you to recommit to VMN. I ask that you commit to serving on a VMN committee. I invite you to commit to serving mediation awareness ambassadors in daily interactions with your loved ones, business colleagues and governmental officials.

Remember, conflict is not bad, conflict is not good, conflict is necessary; often, conflict is the key to a must needed change.

Have a safe and Happy Holiday Season.

Vickie R. Williams-Cullins, MPA
VMN President
Legislative Day 2020!

Plans are in the works to visit the Capitol! If you are interested in joining the group of Mediators, please contact the VMN office at virginmediationnetwork@gmail.com for details.

Did you know VMN has a Facebook and LinkedIn page?

Follow us to keep up with current events and news in your area!
The Virginia Mediation Network (VMN) held their Annual Fall Conference at the University of Richmond Jepson Alumni Center September 28-29, 2019. There were 75 participants for the conference, including speakers and attendees. Mediators participated in workshops relevant to mediation in the community and networked with fellow colleagues.

Our theme this year was “Empowering Ourselves for the Future”. There were several excellent presentations that focused on developing skillsets in mediation and how to expand exposure to diversity and cultures in communities served by mediation in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

VMN was honored to have Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities (VCIC) Jaqueline Johnson as our Keynote Speaker. Ms. Johnson presented “Towards More Inclusive Practices in Conflict Resolution”. Ms. Johnson spoke about how as mediators are increasingly engaging with individuals who are different from them, it is critical to think about how we live, work, and play peacefully together. Mediators can address challenges that may arise by considering intentional inclusion practices that encourage new understandings of ourselves and those around us. During the presentation, participants reflected on their own identities, understanding the value of inclusive concepts, and considering individual and community actions to foster inclusion for the benefit of conflict resolution professionals and clientele.

Mediators also enjoyed a workshop presented by Waheba and Lyla Zeidan “Having Fun in the Kitchen with Mediation”. In this workshop participants had a fun and interactive session that stretched everyone’s imagination when it came to mediation as they related aspects of mediation to baking. Waheba and Lyla discussed the ingredients of an effective mediator and the directions to the 4 stages of the mediation process. The participants discovered new ways to describe and relate mediation to parties and experienced first hand the importance of the right balance of ingredients in mediation and how it parallels baking chocolate chip cookies!

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In another workshop, attendees learned about “The Alternatives in Alternative Dispute Resolution” from Brenda Waugh. She discussed how “parties, mediators and lawyers need to understand all of the options available to disputants so that they discuss options with clients and assist them in evaluating the best process for their situation”. Workshop participants had fun creating “Human Sculptures” of the many forms of ADR. The workshop included in depth discussion of the many forms of ADR and how to determine what type of ADR is best for mediators and their clients.

There were many other educational opportunities for mediators in all specialty areas to participate in over the weekend. VMN is very appreciative of the many speakers that presented workshops. We thank you so much for your dedication to making the Fall Conference a great success. It could not have been done without you.

The VMN Annual Members meeting was held on Saturday, September 28th during the lunch hour. VMN members voted on and passed new Bylaws updates and awarded the Mediator of the Year award to Karen H. Richards. Well done Karen! The membership also voted in new board member Kristen Kalina. Welcome to the board Kristen! There is currently still one open position on the VMN Board of Directors. If you are interested in joining the board, please reach out to the VMN office at virginiamediationnetwork@gmail.com.

Each year, VMN tries to educate conference attendees on trends and new developments in mediation. If you are interested in presenting at the Fall Conference, the Call for Speakers will open in early, 2020. Our Conference Chair for 2020 is Dan Hand. Please reach out to Dan if you are interested in presenting or have attended any recent workshops the VMN membership would benefit from.

The Fall Conference is always a great opportunity for mediators to obtain CME credits, learn important information to improve their mediation practice and visit with friends and other practitioners. VMN also wants to thank its membership for their continued support, and we look forward to seeing everyone at next year’s fall conference.

VMN will be celebrating its 30 Year Anniversary as the Professional Organization for Mediators in the Commonwealth of Virginia! What started as a ‘grassroots’ effort in 1986, then incorporated on September 20, 1990, has provided networking, educational opportunities and a community of Mediators in Virginia for 30 years! Quite an accomplishment for a non-profit by today’s standards. Come join the Fun!
Mediator of the Year 2019

Congratulations to Karen H. Richards!

Karen H. Richards has worked as a mediator and conflict resolution and communication trainer since 1993. As a Virginia Certified general and family mediator (all levels), mentor, and trainer, Karen has trained more than 1,800 people from across the country and the world in conflict resolution and communication skills. She also has provided more than 1,600 hours of mediation and facilitation services to hundreds of individuals, families, and organizations. Karen is certified to administer the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI®), Steps 1® and 2® and has provided MBTI® assessments and training to state agencies, businesses and organizations in Virginia. Recently, Karen was certified to administer the Pearman Personality Integrator. She also serves as a Workplace Mediator for the Virginia Department of Human Resource Management Office of Equal Employment Dispute Resolution’s statewide workplace mediation program. In 2011 she was honored for “Advancing the Profession of Mediation” by the former non-profit community mediation center, Virginia Conflict Resolution Center.

Karen is a longtime member of the Virginia Mediation Network serving on the Board of Directors from 2012-2018 and was President from 2015-2017. She is also a member of the Association for Conflict Resolution, the National Association for Community Mediation, the Association for Talent Development (formerly American Society for Training and Development) and the Association for Psychological Type International. She received a B.S. in Journalism from University of Maryland – College Park, and an M.A. in Transpersonal Studies from Atlantic University where she was a member of the faculty from 2011-2014.

Congratulations, Karen, and thank you for all you do for mediation throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia.
Putting Children First

Jeffrey Shelton, Ph.D.

Couples with children never marry with the intention of getting divorced. A mediated agreement is desirable because the parents usually do not have a desire to “go to court”. Busy courts want to minimize the amount of court time spent on family-related cases, so hearings are held only in contested cases, which often involve allegations of child abuse. This provides more stress for everyone.

Mediation provides an opportunity for fathers to become involved and some fathers advocate for “50/50” parenting, while many more are passive. Some mothers have brought them to juvenile court to get them involved with their child. The longer that a father (or mother) has been uninvolved in their child’s life, the more difficult it is to motivate them to participate.

How does the nature of the relationship between parents (i.e. long-standing and “family-like” vs. almost non-existent) affect the situation of the children? I rely on my observations in a family court. Some experience anger, hurt, grief and loss when their relationship, while other’s feelings are less intense and last for a shorter time because the emotional investment of partners has ended. But the negative effects on the child can continue for years, unless the parents handle the situation properly, not easy but it can be done.

Many have little dialogue about how their child will be parented, at least before they come to mediation. A considerable amount of time may pass—even years – before someone petitions. There may arise a destabilizing factor such as a new boyfriend or girlfriend who is interacting with the child. A mother may permit the father of the child having custody to call the father’s friend “Momma”. In cases where the child is mostly with their mother, the father may petition the court with good reason, questioning the presence of a boyfriend in her household.

Research shows that the incidence of child abuse is high in such a situation, especially when the mother leaves the child in the care of her boyfriend.

What about cases in which there is little or no relationship between the parents when the child was born? In mediation, perhaps because the parents have little history between them or may have moved on to other partners, there may be less acrimony. An exception may occur in cases- usually involving young parents-where the child is with the mother, and she doubts the father’s capacity or judgement to take proper care of the child. If the mother approves of the child’s paternal grandmother as a part-time caretaker of the child, then the situation can be quickly resolved. I have had success with suggesting to the mother- who often has assistance from her mother with the child - that she invites the father to her home and to demonstrate to him critical skills such as changing diapers, playing with the child and bathing the child. The mother’s anxiety may decrease since the father has shown that he now has the skills to do the job.  

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In mediation, never-married parent, provided there are not extraneous factors such as problematic significant others, are often surprisingly amenable to joint legal custody, though shared physical custody may be less agreeable to one parent. Issues about physical custody often seem to be mostly about a perceived sense of unfairness or the fear of losing out as a parent more than anything else.

There are difficulties in the situations of never married parents that need to be pointed out. The income and education levels of unmarried parents are lower than divorced couples. Relatively fewer of these parents hire attorneys, and in even fewer cases are both represented. While as a mediator I sometimes find attorneys to be a hindrance to the process, I also recognize that there can be significant merit in receiving legal counsel concerning one’s case.

In some cases, there is insufficient wealth available to provide for the needs of the child after the divorce. In many never-married cases, a father doesn’t have private medical insurance for themselves or their child. I have mediated quite a few cases in which the parent who has the child most (usually the mother) is receiving Medicaid. The other parent (usually the father) may make a decent wage, but his income has not been reported so there may be a fraud situation.

In instances where the parents or their child (or both) need additional assistance such as therapy, this may be less likely to be arranged, due to the cost, but also to a lack of interest in therapy.

In conclusion, mediation provides the ideal way in which to address issues in a productive manner.

Jeffery Shelton  
Jeffre111@cox.net  
Shelton Mediation and Consultation  
Chesapeake, VA  
757-842-1603
2020 Membership Renewal Now Open!

Click here to register online for your VMN Membership 2020 today!

Attention! Membership Increase in February 2020!

Renew or Join Now!

VMN will increase the Basic Membership fee in February 2020 to $150. Members who renew their membership or join VMN by January 31, 2020 can renew or join at the current rate of $125. The increase is the first in many years and is due to increased expenses over the years. The rate for the Enhanced Membership will increase to $200. Student Membership will be reduced to $25. As noted elsewhere in the newsletter, VMN has some great plans for 2020 and beyond. Among the benefits of becoming a member is the opportunity to receive discounted registration fees for conferences and webinars and be eligible to participate in a group mediator liability insurance program at a discounted rate. Click on the link above to learn more about the benefits of becoming a member.

Changes to fee structure to take effect February 1, 2020! Register prior to February 1, 2020 to save $25.00 on your VMN Membership. After January 31, 2020 Membership Rates will increase to:

- Basic Membership will increase to $150.00
- Enhanced Membership will increase to $200.00
- Student Membership is decreased to $25.00
Last Name: _____________________________________________________
First Name: ________________________Middle Name OR Nickname : ______________________________
Email: _______________________________________________________________________________________
Address: _____________________________________________________________________________________
City:_____________________________ State:___________ Zip:_________________
Phone:____________________ Website:_____________________________________________

Are you interested in serving on a VMN Committee(s)?
Please check which Committee(s) you are interested in:
□ Conference / Education Committee □ Membership Committee
□ Communications Committee □ Legislative Committee

VMN MEMBERSHIP Levels 2020

1 Year Membership Levels (Membership is January 1, 2020 through December 31, 2020)

_____ Enhanced Membership $175.00  or $200.00 after January 31, 2020
_____ Basic Membership $125.00 or $150.00 after January 31, 2020
_____ Student Membership $25.00
_____TOTAL ENCLOSED

Payments Accepted: □ VISA □ MASTERCARD □ DISCOVER □ CHECK
CREDIT CARD NUMBER ________________________________________________________________
EXPIRATION DATE ________________ 3 DIGIT CODE (on back of card) _____________
SIGNATURE _______________________________________________________________________

Save time and register online!
Go to www.vamediation.org and go to Membership Tab for online registration.

Mail this printed application and payment to:

VMN, P.O. Box 29007, Henrico, Virginia 23242
Phone: 571-399-8660 or 804-316-5271
2019-2020 Virginia Mediation Network
Board & Committee Chairs

Vickie Wms-Cullins, President
Pamela Struss, PhD, President-Elect
Robert “Bob” Carpenter, Treasurer, Audit Committee
Beth Roper, Secretary
Daniel Hand, Conference Committee Chair
Theresa Merkel, By-Laws Committee Chair
Walter “Skip” Mertz, Audit Committee Chair
Dale Robinson, Membership Committee Chair, Conference Committee
Brenda Booth Lowry, Conference Committee
Michael Schnurman, Nominations Chair, Legislative Committee
Kristen Kalina, Communications Committee

Interested in contributing to your mediation community?

Join our committees! We need your help!

- Membership
- Conferences
- Communications
- Legislative
- Bylaws

If you would like to contact the VMN Board Members, please email them at virginiamediationnetwork@gmail.com. Or to find out more about our committees and get involved, contact us at virginiamediationnetwork@gmail.com or visit our website at www.vamediation.org.
Almost 40 years have passed since the first community mediation center opened in Virginia in 1982. Almost 30 years have elapsed since the passage of Virginia’s mediation statutes in 1992. Today mediation and other forms of non-adversarial dispute resolution are practiced in Virginia in many places and by many people. Are these practices adequately serving the needs of Virginians? Are they making individuals, families, workplaces and communities more productive and peaceful? Are they meeting emerging needs? Are they coordinated so as to be maximally efficient?

An ad-hoc group of stakeholders from various dispute resolution sectors across the Commonwealth have been working over the past year to design a summit that will bring together service providers, consumers, and potential clients to strategically plan the future of dispute resolution in Virginia. Some of these dispute resolution sectors and stakeholders include the Virginia Mediation Network, the Joint Alternative Dispute Resolution Committee of the Virginia State Bar and The Virginia Bar Association, and Resolution Virginia.

Through the provision of panelist data, other concrete information and thoughtful reflection on building future practices we plan to:

- identify current and emerging dispute resolution practices in Virginia,
- align dispute resolution practices with current and emerging needs; and
- enable stakeholder collaboration to meet dispute resolution needs more adequately.

In order for the summit to meet its goals, the participation of a large group of stakeholders interested in charting the future of dispute resolution is desired. It is the intention of the planning group to cast a wide net that includes practitioners, consumers, potential clients and educators as well as legislators, members of the judiciary and representatives of local and state government. We hope that you will participate!

Go to resolutionvirginia.org to register online today.
The presenter will be David J. Smith, JD, MS. David is an adjunct professor in the School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution at George Mason University where he teaches facilitation, reflective practice, and the career intensive course. He is the author of Peace Jobs: A Student’s Guide to Starting a Career Working for Peace (IAP 2016). He started his career as a divorce lawyer, then moved to domestic mediation, community mediation, was a Fulbright Scholar teaching ADR overseas, then ended up at the U.S. Institute of Peace. His MS is in conflict analysis and resolution from GMU. He still engages in community mediation in his local community mediation center in Rockville, MD.

VMN will be hosting David J. Smith of David J. Smith Consulting, LLC for an hour long webinar on Wednesday, March 4, 2020. This 1 hour session will examine approaches that will enable today’s conflict resolution professional to better serve populations that are increasingly changing as a result of demographic and cultural forces.

Those coming from a mediation orientation will be asked to consider new “means” to peaceable “ends” when traditional mediation approaches are insufficient. Topics considered will include dialogic processes, Appreciative Inquiry, coaching, and other forms of intervention that can be assistive in responding to client needs.

The session will include:

- Overview of demographic/cultural changes in Virginia and nationally
- Review of the range of innovative approaches
- Resources and training
- Question and answer

Save the Date! Registration to open January 1st!

VMN Members $10 / Non Members $40
Virginia Mediation Network

2020 Membership Renewal Now Open!

Click here to register online for your VMN Membership 2020 today!

VMN is the only professional organization in Virginia dedicated exclusively to the mediation profession. It is a Sec. 501(c)(6) organization operated by a volunteer board, with the assistance of part-time administrative support staff. VMN was extremely active in the successful effort to increase mediator payment for JD&R court-referred cases. This lobbying is sufficient reason alone to join VMN. We are a statewide voice for mediators with the Governor’s office, the General Assembly and the Supreme Court of Virginia’s Office of Dispute Resolution (DRS). VMN offers at least one annual statewide conference with opportunities for continuing professional education accredited by DRS for mediator recertification. There are many networking opportunities with nationally recognized experts, pioneers in dispute resolution, and other Virginia mediators at annual and regional conferences. Through VMN, mediators have an opportunity to serve the mediation community. As always, there are discounts on professional liability insurance and other member benefits.

VMN is committed to promoting a unified voice for mediation in Virginia and setting and promoting the highest standards of integrity and professionalism in the mediation profession in Virginia. Membership includes quarterly Newsletters and occasional news blasts with articles and up-to-the-minute information on Virginia ADR and mediation events or activities throughout the state of Virginia.

VMN needs the support of ALL certified mediators in Virginia to continue these efforts!

30th Anniversary

Of Serving Mediators in Virginia
VMN is the largest statewide mediation organization and the voice for professional mediators across the Commonwealth of Virginia. For 30 years it has been our mission to exchange ideas, enhance mediator skills, and act as a resource about mediation statewide. Thank you for your membership and participation in 2019. Your continued support of the Virginia Mediation Network has led a very successful year for mediation in Virginia.

We have another exciting year planned ahead. Some special events to watch for include:

- Legislative Day in January, 2020
- March is Mediation Month, 2020
- VMN Spring Conference Webinar featuring David J. Smith March 4, 2020 at 7 pm
- Dispute Resolution Summit March 20, 2020, VMN is a Co-Convener of the Summit at University of Richmond Jepson Alumni Center
- Fall Conference and VMN’s 30 Year Anniversary Celebration!

Membership renewal for 2020 is currently open online at www.vamediation.org. Join early to take advantage of all member discounts throughout the year. Get involved in the Virginia Mediation Network through organizational and committee leadership, and help shape the future of mediation in Virginia.

We look forward to your continued participation and support of Virginia Mediation Network. Happy Holidays to you and your families.

Regards,

The VMN Team