



# Northern Community Mediation

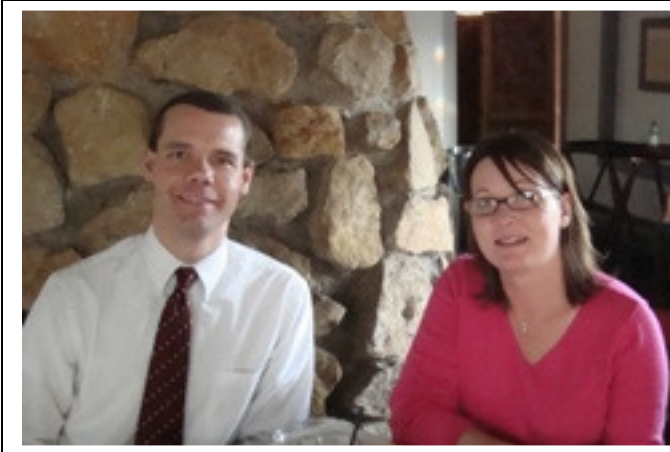
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Serving Emmet &  
Charlevoix Counties

## BRIDGES

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### BOARD RETREAT



Pictured above are President Ted Teller and Secretary Lisa Hoyt taking a moment to pose for the camera.

On April 14—that is correct, the day before tax returns were due—the Board held a retreat. Past-president Steve Tresidder facilitated the S.W.O.T. process. Members talked about the strengths and weaknesses of NCM, and then reflected upon the opportunities that were available to NCM, as well as the threats that exist to the organization. From that discussion, the Board developed three major goals: 1) improve our public relations and community exposure, 2) develop a succession plan, and 3) explore new funding sources. Just to reassure you, no one on the staff is planning on leaving. To have a succession plan in place is merely being proactive

### POLITICIANS AMONG US

Two of our board members are running for public office: Barry Anderson and Connie Saltonstall. Best of luck to both of them.

### CHILD PROTECTION MEDIATION TRAINING

Kathy Lame will be conducting a Child Protection Mediation, two-day workshop on Thursday, September 30 and Friday, October 1 from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm. Although we have a list of people interested in participating in this training, you will need to formally sign-up. You will be notified by e-mail when the registration forms are available on our website.

### THINKING OF YOU

Mediator Lee Hornberger had rotator-cuff surgery a short time ago. Hope all is going well, Lee.

### NO SMOKING

On May 1, the new, anti-smoking law went into effect. This does have an impact on NCM since some of our clients do step outside of the building to smoke. Although the new law does not address a specific distance, it does state that a smoker must be far enough away from a building so that his/her cigarette smoke does not enter the building through the windows or doors. Additionally, someone coming into the building should not have to walk through space where someone is smoking. Therefore, it is important that if the parties at mediation want to smoke during a break they be told that they need to do so in their cars.

Intake Coordinator Cheryl Bauman had a great suggestion as to how to handle this issue. During your opening statement, simply state that “in order to stay in compliance with the new law, we ask that if you want to smoke, you do so in your car.”

### SOME REMINDERS

We all realize that at times it is difficult not to give our opinions, but remaining neutral is at the heart of mediation. Without the neutrality, we lose the essence of the process. Therefore, please refrain from comments like, “I would never ask my neighbor to do that,” or “Don’t you think you are being a little unreasonable?”

### VERBAL AGREEMENTS

Recently, we have had several incidents where verbal agreements were made. This puts NCM in a difficult position because we have to have something in writing to show that there was an actual agreement. The reason for this is that we are audited by the state. If they were randomly to pull up a case in which we reported that there was an agreement and had no paper work to show that agreement, our funding could be in jeopardy.

We have double checked with SCAO, and the answer was emphatic. Without something in writing, we cannot state that there is an agreement. Even if there is a verbal agreement at the table, unless there is something in writing stating the agreement and signed by the parties, we have to count it as “no agreement.” Therefore, we are removing the option “verbal agreement” from the appropriate forms.

### ANOTHER REMINDER

When a case is referred for a specific reason, remember to at least address that issue. If there is no agreement in relationship to that issue yet there is resolution on other issues, include in the agreement that no agreement was reached on the referred issue.