

LET THERE BE PEACE ON EARTH



From 2017 through 2019, Northern Community Mediation (NCM) placed two peace banners in the Charlevoix and Emmet County libraries on a rotating basis during the holidays. Because of COVID, the peace banners were not distributed in 2020 and 2021.

During a recent staff meeting, the staff was discussing the horror of the situation in Ukraine. A light bulb went on in our heads. Why not make use of the peace banners now? With the exception of one caveat, it took only minutes for Case Managers Karen Cole and Laura Buckingham and Executive Director Jane Millar to make the decision to go forward with the idea. Rotating the two banners among the libraries, however, did not make sense. Therefore, it was decided that NCM would bite the bullet and pay to have four more banners made so that the message of peace could be displayed at six of the local libraries continuously.

Within half-an-hour, the Marketing Committee headed by Jenny Brower and Lisa Hoyt were in complete support of the idea, and within an hour the four additional banners were ordered and available for pick-up the next day. When contacted, all six library directors were pleased to be able to display the banners. And, within two days, all six banners were in the six libraries: Boyne City, Charlevoix, East Jordan, Harbor Springs, Pellston and Petoskey. As an aside, staff at the Petoskey Library took it upon themselves to add the Ukrainian flags.

USELESS FACT

Children grow faster during the spring than other times of the year.

SUGGESTIONS

For the protection of our mediators, NCM has always had the policy that mediators should not give out their last names. This includes not having your last name appear on your square when you are on Zoom. If you see your last name, you can delete it in one of two ways. In the upper right-hand corner are three dots. Click on those, and you will be able to delete your last name. Or, at the bottom of the screen, you can click on Participants. You will then see your name in the right-hand column. Click on where it says "More" and you will have the option to remove your last name. This is for your safety and protection so that you are not harassed at home by a client

If you are mediating a case that involves a student and the phrase "IEP" comes up let the parties involved know that if there is a need for an Individual Educational Profile to be developed or altered, NCM has mediators who could facilitate this process between the school and the parents.

Prior to mediation, the Case Managers send out several documents to the mediators. One of those documents is the Agreement Form. At the top of the page is a list of who is attending the mediation. At the bottom of the agreement form is a list of those individuals who should sign if an agreement is reached. If a person's name is not listed at the bottom of the page, it is inappropriate for him/her to sign.

ZOOM V. IN-PERSON MEDIATIONS

Prior to COVID, for the most part, all mediations were done in person. There were the occasional exceptions where one of the parties participated via conference call. COVID changed all of that such that all mediations have been done via Zoom since April 2020. Although it took a while to adapt to this new way of doing business, it has proven to be more efficient and cost effective. Additionally, the quality of service has not been diminished, as is evidenced by data such as the fact that the agreement rates have not dropped.

In talking with the other CDRP center directors, the trend is that Zoom will be the preferred method of conducting mediations. In-person will be the exception to the rule. This viewpoint is also reflected in the court system. I know that some of you simply do not want to do Zoom, and that is unfortunate. Our decision, however, is based upon what is best for NCM and the participants, particularly the clients and the attorneys. We are, after all, a service oriented organization. Feel free to call me if you would like to discuss this further.

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

Cleaning your house while the kids are still growing is like shoveling the walk before it stops snowing. ` Phyllis Diller

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