MEDIATION: A RESOURCE FOR THE JUSTICE SYSTEM

Thomas F. Christian Ph.D. (73)

Americans seem very quick to call the police, sur at the drop of a hat, and take everything and anything to court. In Europe, Africa, and other parts of the world, dispute resolution through mediation is a first step in handling problems. The courtroom is reserved for serious, technical and legal issues. A movement—community dispute resolution—is underway to change the litigious penchant of Americans.

Over the past 10 years, dispute resolution centers in the United States have grown significantly; once numbering only 3, there are now over 200. In New York state there are 35 centers handling over 50,000 contacts and referrals annually. The New York program, spearheaded by Lawrence H. Cooke, the chief judge of the state, is the first network of dispute resolution centers authorized and funded by state law.

Dispute resolution programs serve as a resource to citizens and the justice system in resolving conflicts and in preventing problems from escalating into more serious criminal or civil matters. They relieve the courts of a number of matters that do not require a formal judicial structure. They can prevent and reduce crime by providing a neutral setting conducive to conflict resolution and to teaching individuals how to resolve their own problems through mediation rather than more drastic measures.

Just what is a community dispute resolution center and how does it work? It is an alternative approach to solving less serious criminal and civil problems. Instead of going to court, individuals sit down with a trained neutral mediator and work towards a mutually agreeable solution. The mediators are volunteer citizens trained in dispute resolution techniques. They come from all walks of life. Instead of complaining about how terrible our society is, the volunteers are doing something constructive about improving their world.

In New York, private non-profit agencies contract with the State to provide dispute resolution services for the Unified Court System. Referrals can be made to the programs by individuals involved in a dispute or by friends, neighbors, clergy, schools, police, lawyers, employers, social agencies, district attorneys, and judges. Judges can actually adjourn a matter in contemplation of dismissal and send it to a dispute resolution center. Disputes involved in resolution programs include aggravated harassment, animal complaints, assault, breach of contract, consumer/merchant, criminal trespass, domestic, employer/employee, forgery, fraud, bad checks, harassment, interpersonal dispute, landlord/tenant, menacing, neighbor/neighbor, noise, personal/real property, petty larceny, reckless endangerment, restitution for damages up to $1,000, school problems, small claims, theft of services and violations of town and city ordinances.

The mediation process begins when the person who has a complaint comes or is referred to a dispute resolution center. The other party, the respondent, is asked to appear for a mediation conference. The process is voluntary, but if a party does not want to attend, they are informed that the matter may go to court. The mediator first explains the entire process to both individuals. Each must consent to have the problem handled through mediation. They then present their positions on the problem without interruption. The mediator may talk to each person individually. When the parties reach agreement, a written document is drawn up by both parties, and it becomes a legal, binding contract.

What are the advantages to taking the problem to a dispute resolution center rather than to the police, the district attorney or the court? The dispute is scheduled...
To maintain Criminal Justice’s strong academic emphasis within the context of professional education, our School must maintain close liaison with its constituency. It is important both to sponsor the research necessary to cope with current and long term problems in criminal justice and to offer a curriculum that reflects the changing needs of the student, practitioners, and academic communities. The School must continue to develop its linkages with practicing criminal justice agencies and professionals. The upcoming 50th anniversary of the School of Criminal Justice provides the alumni with an opportunity to promote these objectives.

The School of Criminal Justice will reach its 50th year in 1985. This milestone should be marked with an appropriate ceremony recognizing the outstanding accomplishments of the School, one which will ensure its continued success in the future.

In addition to a Golden Jubilee celebration, the Alumni Board is studying ways of making a more lasting memorial. Several goals are being considered at this time: endowments for graduate assistantships and the Ronnen Memorial Library have been proposed, as has an endowed Chair or even a new building for the School. Each goal is directed toward improving the quality of undergraduate and graduate education. We are limited in achieving goals only by the level of support we receive from alumni and friends. The Board needs your help. We also need your ideas concerning ways to make the 50th anniversary celebration and memorial successful.

Law Basilek and Ralph Turner are coordinating the Golden Jubilee for November 1985. The theme, "Criminal Justice—Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow,” will provide alumni and friends of the School with a retrospective view of its role in Criminal Justice as well as with ideas for the future. A celebration banquet will conclude this unique opportunity to reminisce.

Make plans now to help us sponsor and celebrate our Golden Jubilee. Contact alumni in your locale and stimulate renewed interest in our School and University.

Alumni Update

Thomas E. Hoebenhet (68) is manager of protection services for Steelcase Inc. of Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Aaron R. Winters (83) is operations manager of the Ingham County Human Society in Lansing, Michigan.

Thomas A. Noullette (72) is the Vice President of Loss Prevention for Hart Schaffner & Marx of Chicago, Illinois.

Susan B. Whaley (73) is a probation officer with the Dallas City Adult Probation in Texas.

Doug Deegan Jr. (83) is the General Superintendent for the Christian System in Baltimore, Maryland.

Judith A. Gleeson (71) is a court administrator with the 43rd District Court of Fremd, Michigan.

Robert W. Heis (74) is an Attorney at Law practicing in Angola, Indiana.

Harold F. Fazekas (58) is with the FBI as a Special Agent in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Frank W. Vandenwall (72) is the Assistant Director of Highway Traffic Safety at Michigan State University in East Lansing, Michigan.

Reverend Richard B. Cournoyer (70) is with the Ew. Boswell Presbyterian Church in Chico, California.

Harry E. Miller (73) is a juvenile probation officer with the Erie County court in Pennsylvania.

James D. Bryant (79) is assistant attorney general for the State of Kentucky.

John W. Wiegler (72) is an assistant professor for the Department of Criminal Justice at Bowling Green State University, Ohio.

Nancy G. Sundell (73) is a Unicef Staff Member in the United States.

Donna A. French (72) is a police officer for the Ingham County Sheriff Department in Mason, Michigan.

Catherine M. Tinnon (83) is a paralegal for Newman and Scheck of New York, New York.

David A. Zellers (83) is the Deputy Sheriff of Charlotte County, Florida.

Mediation continued...
Criminal Justice alumni returned to campus for the Homecoming football game against Minnesota on October 29, 1983. The alumni were escorted by the Spartans’ victory.

On October 28 the Board of Directors of the Criminal Justice Constituency Association met to conduct business and to plan the School of Criminal Justice’s 50th anniversary. The directors, under President Donald Bennett (’70) also hosted a successful reception following the football game. Held in the Union Building’s Gold Room, the reception attracted over 35 alumni and guests from across the nation. Everyone enjoyed getting reacquainted over a buffet lubricated by wine and soft drinks. They also had the opportunity to meet with Art Brandstatter, alumni and retired Director of the School, and Robert Trojanowski, the School’s head since 1980. (See photos.)

The CJ Alumni 1984 Homecoming reception will be October 13. The football game is against Indiana. We are looking forward to another successful game and reunion. Plan on attending. More information to follow.

The “Buffet”
School of Criminal Justice, Alumni Newsletter

Training: Past and Present
Paul Embert (’70)
Training Coordinator

As a professional school, Criminal Justice has traditionally provided three services: research, undergraduate and graduate education, and service through lifelong education and training. These three foci can be viewed as legs of a tripod, each supporting the overall goals of the School.

As the School approaches its 50th anniversary, it has reassessed and restructured the continuing education and training component. In the past, continuing education services were limited to an occupationally specific and technical orientation. While established linkages with criminal justice practitioners mandated continued technical training, the School is now looking to pioneer new frontiers. Continuing education is reaching for an audience of individuals who are in a position to influence decisions within their agencies, businesses, or communities. By focusing on problems which transcend agency boundaries, new linkages will emerge and a dialogue among professionals throughout and beyond the criminal justice system should occur. The effort will require refinement of our existing offerings and development of new, innovative programs.

With a revised philosophy and a new challenge serving as a driving force, the School currently explores a broad range of seminar topics to be offered on an annual basis. We are contacting community and business leaders, practitioners, and educators in an attempt to look toward the 1984-85 academic year. Topics being developed include computer fraud, time and systems management, interviewing for position of trust, health care security, suicide prevention in detention facilities, and security guard training. The highly regarded forensic pathology program will continue to be offered and improved. While 1984 holds promise, it should be only the first small step leading to a giant leap for the school and the communities it serves.
WHERE ARE YOU?

Please let us know. If you will be moving or have changed positions, take the time to complete, detach and return the form below. Our records will be much more accurate as a result, and other people may be interested in seeing your name in the Alumni Update section of the next newsletter. Please mail your information to the School of Criminal Justice, 560 Baker Hall, East Lansing, Michigan 48824-1118. THANK YOU.

Name ____________________________
Address __________________________
_______________________________
Home Phone: ______________________
☐ Yes! I'd like to appear in the Alumni Update.

Position __________________________
Business Address ____________________
_______________________________
Office Phone: ______________________
☐ No! Don't dare print any information about me in the Alumni Update.