

Alberta Family Mediation Society Newsletter

Edition 21: March 2007

Special points of interest:

- We welcome your input about the newsletters and encourage you to submit articles and features

Mark your calendars for the AFMS conference April 26 and 27th 2007 in Calgary. The Annual General Meeting is April 27/07 at 1:00 pm.

For Mediators and other ADR Professionals, Dr. Ahrons will present on: Pathways to a Good Divorce: The Children's Perspective. This session will be extremely valuable for family mediators and those providing other services to families who are/ have experienced separation or divorce (April 27/07 8:30-4:30 at the Hotel Arts in Calgary).

Dr. Ahrons will also be providing a session to the general public titled: What children want parents to know about divorce and re-marriage.

There will also be a variety of exhibitors with various resources and materials that will be of interest to professionals and the general public.

See page 7 for information and a summary of an article written by Dr. Ahrons.

Nominations for the John Haynes award are being accepted until March 31/07– see page 2 for more Information.

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Lunch and Learn Sessions

The location is always the Edmonton City Hall in the Heritage Room. Doors open at 11:30 a.m. and the presentations run from noon until 1:00 p.m. There is a question period and mixer beginning at 1:00 to 1:30. This is a great venue to learn, share information and network with colleagues (all over a lunch break).

There is no cost and you just need to bring your own lunch.

Wednesday May 2/07– Edmonton Public Schools– Peer Mediation Programs.

Wednesday June 6/07– Diane Daley– Mediation & Restorative Justice Centre. One year later– an overview of the research for assessing family violence and dynamics of restorative justice mediation.

John Haynes Award

At the Annual General Meeting each year, someone is awarded to a person who has made an outstanding contribution in the field of Family Mediation in Alberta. This is done in memory of the late Dr. John Haynes who pioneered the early training of family mediators in the province. This award has been in existence since 2001.

This year the Board has established a set of guidelines with respect to nominations for this Award. The committee is now seeking nominations for candidates until March 31/07. For details contact Sue Bedier at AFMS.

Past recipients include:

2000: Dr. Larry Fong
 2001: Louis Faber
 2002: The Honourable Judge Nancy A. Flatters
 2003: The Honourable Madam Justice M.J. Trussler
 2004: Dr. Kent Taylor
 2005: Diane Shearer
 2006: Patricia Blocksom and Mary Jane Klein

From the newsletter Editor– Charmaine Hammond

I recently had the wonderful opportunity (and privilege) to hear the Extreme Kindness Crew (from BC) present on Kindness. They have sparked a revolution of kindness across Canada and have a four pillar program that focuses on:

- Kindness to co-workers,
- Kindness to Self
- Kindness to Customers/clients
- Kindness to Community

Their approach is one that can be imported into all areas of our lives, and like the analogy of paying it

forward (Pay it Forward by Catherine Ryan Hyde), random acts of kindness can create a ripple effect of change and growth.



Helpful Information

Acts of Kindness– making a difference

The Kindness Crew promotes the impacts that acts of kindness have in the lives of people. Based on the analogy of “paying it forward”, one simple act of kindness has the ability to become a contagion spreading kindness across our communities and fields of practice.

Ever heard of the Helpers High? Scientists have discovered that when we help others and show compassion our bodies release more serotonin into our systems.

Serotonin is the neurotransmitter responsible for the sudden spikes of happiness and contentment we sometimes feel.

An act of service to another human being can quite literally pull you out of a slump: it's a win win!

We've all heard the phrase, “kill them with kindness”. Try diffusing aggression with compassion next time you are challenged. Studies have show that aggression can be chemically de-railed by the nervous system if genuine kindness is shown in a tense interaction.

Compliments of the Kindness Crew. To find out more about the Kindness Crew, check out their webpage at www.extremekindness.com

Want to learn more about eldercare mediation?

Family Mediation Canada has a web seminar on March 28 on this topic!

Presenter: Judy McCann Beranger

Date: Wednesday March 28, 2007, 1:30-2:30PM eastern time

Cost: \$69 per participant

Register: <http://fmc.websessions.org>

Topics to be considered include:

What is eldercare mediation?

Pioneering efforts in eldercare mediation

Eldercare issues that could create conflict in families

Elder abuse & Adult Protection Act

Unique characteristics that require a mediator's attention

Where to get help and Open forum for Q&A at session conclusion

Membership Categories with AFMS

Registered Family Mediator (RFM) specializing in separation/divorce mediation.

Registered Family Mediator (RFM) specializing in General Family Mediation.

Registered Family Mediator (RFM) specializing in Family Business Mediation.

Practicing Mediator (designation for those who are continuing to gain mediation experience or for whom mediation is a small part of their practice.

General Member
Student Member

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Alberta *family* Mediation Society

*Advancing the practice of
family mediation.*

*We're on the web—
look us up!*

About AFMS

Established in 1984,
the non-profit
society provides
services to family
mediators.

The organization has a
part time administrative
assistant and is managed
by a volunteer board of
directors, with
representatives across the
province.

The society is dedicated to
both professional and public
education regarding family
mediation.

“Social Networks that embody norms
of reciprocity and compassion are the
key enablers of innovation and
productivity growth.”

Powell et al, 1996

“Compassionate communication is a
simple yet powerful methodology for
communicating in a way that meets
both parties' needs.”

Nonviolent communication: a
language of life, 2003.

“The average adult laughs 15
times each day, a child 400
times a day.” M. Beck, 2003.

*Coming together is a
beginning.*

*Keeping together is
progress.*

*Working together is
success.*

- Henry Ford

Don't Miss the AFMS Annual Conference— Special Guest Speaker Dr. Ahrons April 26 and 27th, 2007 at the Hotel Arts in Calgary.

In this workshop, Dr. Ahrons will challenge current stereotypes and clarify confusing findings about the long-term outcomes of divorce for children and families. She will present the most recent findings from her landmark longitudinal study, drawing upon in-depth interviews with 173 grown children twenty years after their parents' divorce.

From these children we will learn about their living arrangements over the years and how they felt about them; their relationships with their parents, stepparents, half and step siblings and how they changed over the years; how their relationships with their fathers were affected; how they feel about themselves now; how they think their parents divorce impacted them. We will also look at the major factors that mediate the outcome of divorce and compare the differences between those who thrived and those who became victims.

Dr. Ahrons will then address how mediation and collaborative divorce can change the divorce paradigm and help parents increase their children's resilience in spite of stressful family changes.

Author of the highly praised books, *The Good Divorce*, and *We're Still Family*, Constance Ahrons is Professor Emerita from the Department of Sociology and former Director of the Marriage and Family Therapy Doctoral Training Program at the University of Southern California.

An internationally renowned lecturer, workshop leader, and consultant, Dr. Ahrons is considered to be one of the top professionals in the field of divorce. An innovative thinker with over 30 years of experience as an educator, family therapist, and researcher, Dr. Ahrons coined the term binuclear family and has pioneered the concept of a good divorce. As a keynote speaker and lecturer, she is known for her ability to explain complex research concepts and findings in clear, understandable language. One of her trademarks is her use of humor to demonstrate current thinking about societal issues and social change.

Dr. Ahrons is frequently sought out by the media as an expert on divorce and family dynamics. She has appeared on numerous radio and TV shows such as *The Today Show*, *Oprah*, *Good Morning America*, *CBS Early Show*, *CNN* and *NPR*. The divorced mother of two grown daughters, she lives and works in San Diego, California, as the Director of Divorce and Remarriage Consulting Associates.

Check out the AFMS Website for more information:

Professional Workshop

8:30am - 4:30pm

Friday April 27, 2007 at the Hotel Arts Calgary Alberta (119 12th Ave SW)

Public Event

April 26th at 7:00 p.m. at the Hotel Arts Calgary Alberta (119 12th Ave SW)

Annual General Meeting: April 27/07 at 1:00 pm (at lunch break during the workshop). All members are welcome—you don't need to be attending the workshop to attend the AGM.

The power of forgiveness in separation and divorce

Debbie Ford, in "The Gifts of your marriage" states that it is natural for individuals to hold onto their pain as a result of a loss or catastrophic life event as a defense or coping mechanism. She suggests that sometimes this pain hardens to the point that it blocks individuals from being able to take stock of the gifts and strengths that existed in the relationship pre-separation. She suggests that the healing process is often benefited from the couple noting the gifts that they received from their marriage and from each other. Examples might be:

- I became a parent
- We gave our child the best we could
- I lived in a great community
- I met new friends and my extended family are still my friends
- Etc.

Nicholas Long and Rex Forehand suggest a few ways that may help in trying to keep the non custodial parent actively engaged in the children's lives after a divorce:

- Create smooth and consistent transitions between homes,
- Keep a folder with information to share with the other parent. Include things like report cards, school-work, school calendars, activity schedules, photographs, and videos. You can give these items (or copies) to your ex-spouse. Keeping the other parent regularly informed about your child's life can make him/her feel and remain more connected and thus more likely to continue involvement.
- Talk to the child's other parent about the positive things, not just the problems or frustrations
- Encourage your child to also initiate activities with his/her other parent
- Encourage and model communication with the other parent

Book Review- "There's always hope" by Dr. Terrie L. Sizemore

The divorce magazine reports that for families of teenagers, a small but special book can help them understand how teenagers may be feeling during a separation or divorce in the family.

There's Always Hope is a 50-page paperback book by Dr. Terrie L. Sizemore, RN, RVM, that's told from the perspective of "Hope," a child of divorce. The book is based on actual events and situations that the author, a pediatric nurse, shared with a child over a 10-year period of time. Terrie Sizemore wrote the book to offer hope and strength to young readers who are experiencing separation or divorce in their family, and also to give parents, teachers, and counselors a "closer and sensitive look at the children who experience divorce."

"This story opens with Hope at five years old and continues through her childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood. With the help of her family – and a special friend named Kate – Hope recovers from the upset of her parents' divorce to succeed in her young life. "

Divorce Magazine.com

The Family Therapy Magazine recently printed an article written by Dr. Ahrons on the Long Term Effects of Divorce on children.

Dr. Ahrons writes that the research is stating that 75-80% of the children who experience separation or divorce in their family grow up to be healthy well functioning adults however there is another 20-25% that experience long term consequences as a result of the divorce. Recent findings are indicating that the consequences that some children face can be impacted by a number of factors such as the child's temperament and coping abilities and skills, resilience, the level of emotional health prior to the divorce, the quality of the relationship with the parents prior to (and after) the divorce. Some of the factors that seem to have a significant impact on how well the child copes after the divorce include factors such as: the parent's level of maturity, parent's mental health and coping, the ongoing relationship between the parents, the economic resources of the parents, the timing and nature of new parent relationships and cohabitation and the behavior of the parents. It is difficult to determine which children (and under what specific conditions) will experience long term consequences after a divorce. There are many complexities at play and many factors that impact the child and the family functioning. Divorce is a stressful process and involves many difficult transitions for the child and other family members. Ahrons reports that ongoing and unresolved conflict (regardless if the parents are married or divorced) can have negative impacts on children. While there is not agreement of the definition of a "high conflict marriage", Ahrons reports that high conflict marriages end in divorce about 1/4 of the time. The research on early intervention is promising reports Ahrons, and it is showing that programs that are educational, counseling, mediation and programs that teach parents how to resolve conflicts are positively impacting families and that there is a reduction in inter-parental conflict.

She also discusses the significant changes in the social climate over the past three years and that during this time, there has been numerous and significant changes in divorce laws and the values from which the laws are predicated. One such development is the growing agreement that the process of divorce begins long before the separation becomes a legal divorce and that it also continues long after the divorce is legal.

Ahrons states that "knowledge truly is power" and that education will help parents in the many choices and decisions they have to make, and how these decisions will impact the children. Dr. Ahrons also states that "we can assist parents in finding the shoes that pinch the least by identifying patterns of strength and resilience in children who thrive in healthy post divorce families." (Dr. Ahrons, Family Therapy Magazine).

Credit: Family Therapy Magazine

Learn more about this and other information about the effects of divorce on children at the upcoming AFMS conference April 2007!!!!