



# The Mediator

Winter 2008

## Forgiveness Comes to Lane County

By Ted Lewis

### UPCOMING EVENTS

#### FORGIVENESS PROJECT

February 22 - March 7, 2008  
(See inside for calendar of specific Forgiveness Project events.)

#### RJP TRAINING

April 26-27, 2008

#### RELOCATION OF CMS OFFICES

June 2008

#### VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION BBQ

JULY 2008

### Forgiveness Project Fundraising Event

Please join us on Friday, February 22 at 7:00 p.m. (volunteers please arrive 30 minutes early) at the Fenario Gallery (located at the corner of Willamette and Broadway in downtown Eugene), to enjoy catered hours-de-oeuvres, fabulous speakers and a powerful exhibit entitled *The F-Word: Photos and Stories of Forgiveness*. You will have an opportunity at this event to financially support our mission to transform conflict and facilitate positive dialogue in Lane County. Please plan to be there, and bring a friend!

Coming up very soon (Feb. 22 to Mar. 7) is an exciting, two-week set of events dealing with the topic of forgiveness. For volunteers who work in both victim-offender mediation and community dispute mediation here at CMS, this issue is very real, but it's amazing how rarely the word "forgiveness", if at all, gets verbalized in a mediation context.

At some level, our society is not very comfortable with the notion of forgiveness, and yet there appears to be a rising interest in the subject. One reason for this is that forgiveness strikes very deep for both personal and global situations. Many people are seeing that without forgiveness, past hurts and harms continue to influence the present through negative behaviors and communication choices.

By bringing The Forgiveness Project picture-and-story exhibit to our area, planners have set a goal to get people thinking more deeply about forgiveness and to stimulate more dialogue. Numerous workshops and presentations throughout the two-weeks are designed to help participants explore the meaning of forgiveness for themselves and for broader societies. An inside page has a full calendar, and lists the main website.

This morning I opened a letter from a teen offender who was asked to write an apology to the wife of the victim he met with in a previous mediation. He had been charged with trespassing and harassment. The meeting started with a lot of tension and thankfully ended with good resolve. At the end of his letter he wrote: "I'm so sorry. I never meant for things to go that way. I hope you can find it in your heart to forgive me."

While forgiveness is primarily one person's moral response to another's injustice, the other person can certainly foster a release point by offering an apology and taking responsibility for the harm done. The boy's sentences show well how apology and forgiveness, though being distinct from each other, are integrally related. Again, the word "forgiveness" hardly ever gets voiced in most mediations, but the experience of forgiveness between parties still happens as bridge-building words allow for the release of burdens that weigh heavy upon both parties.

Such opportunity for relational reconciliation is precisely why third-party neutrals play a key role in our work. They ensure safe, constructive conversation between parties who are emotionally burdened by a conflict or a crime. CMS is blessed to have such a large, vibrant pool of volunteer mediators and community members who journey with Lane County clients who go through our dialogue processes.

Whether you are a volunteer or an ongoing supporter for CMS, I encourage you to take in some of the events during the Realms of Forgiveness to enrich and deepen your own understanding of forgiveness. Through the inspiration of another's story, it may be that you will experience an unexpected 'release' from a personal weight that you carry.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Alan Leiman**  
*Chair*

**Caitlan Hendrickson**  
*Vice Chair*

**Beth Little**  
*Treasurer*

**Marilyn Nelson**  
*Secretary*

**Philip Moses**

**Tim Brewer**

**Melissa Crabbe**

**River Kennedy**

**Capt. Chuck Tilby**

**Char Mauch**

**Ron Chase**



## STAFF

**Chip Coker**  
*Executive Director*

**Ted Lewis**  
*Restorative Justice  
Program Manager*

**Donna Goswick**  
*Community Dispute  
Program Manager and  
Restorative Justice  
Specialist*

## SO LONG MIRIAM...

For those who haven't already heard, we are sad to report that Miriam Edell, long time CMS volunteer and staff member, has resigned to pursue other opportunities.

Miriam first became involved with CMS when she took our basic training course back in 2001, and immediately began mediating cases for us. CMS later hired her, in 2004, to help with program management.

In addition to administering the Small Claims Court program (under a contract with the University Of Oregon School Of Law), Miriam shepherded our Peer Mediation Program, as well as our growing Parent/Teen Mediation Program, and was heavily involved in the education and training aspects of our mission. She also envisioned a more active role for CMS in the area of family mediation and laid the groundwork for us to explore and potentially develop such a program.

The Board of Directors, along with the CMS staff and volunteers, greatly appreciate her years of dedicated service to CMS and her commitment to bringing peace, through dialogue, to our community.

## ...AND HELLO CHIP!

Alan Leiman, current chair of the CMS Board of Directors, is pleased to announce that the long and difficult search for a new Executive Director has ended, with the hiring in January of Michael "Chip" Coker.

Chip, who is licensed to practice law in three states and before the U.S. Supreme Court, comes to us from his recent position as In-House Corporate Counsel for Umpqua Holdings Corporation, the parent company of Umpqua Bank. While at the bank, he also provided pro-bono legal advice to homeless teens through the New Roads/Looking Glass legal aid clinic here in Eugene, run by local attorney Laura Fine.

In addition to being an attorney Chip is a trained mediator and former volunteer for the Orange County Human Relations Commission. His undergraduate degree is a bachelor of arts in liberal studies, with an emphasis in communication theory as applied to alternative dispute resolution. While in law school, he was honored with an American Jurisprudence Award for his academic achievements in Advanced ADR.

Chip married his high school sweetheart (Robin, who is a veterinarian here in town) 21 years ago, and they have three children at home (Brandi - 17, Krystal - 10, and Cody - 8). They moved to Eugene 2 ½ years ago after falling in love with the area while visiting his lifelong best friend, Phil Moses, who happens to be the longest-serving current member of the CMS Board of Trustees. Welcome aboard Chip!!!



Michael "Chip" Coker  
Our new Executive Director

### Greetings to all CMS family members and supporters!!

Obviously, as the new executive director, I am and will be spending a great deal of time thinking about the future of CMS and its role in our community. But to do that effectively, I first needed to take stock of where we have been and where we are now. And I must say that I am impressed. When you consider that we have had four EDs (counting me) in the previous five years, in the context of annual cut-backs in government funding, it wouldn't be hard to imagine CMS as an organization beset with morale and other problems. But it took me all of a nano-second to see and appreciate that CMS is blessed with an incredible, hardworking and dedicated Board of Directors, an amazing cadre of caring, passionate and professional volunteers, and the most amazing staff that an ED could ever hope for. I'm not trying to sugar coat the significant challenges, particularly budgetary, that we face here in the near future, but I am 100% confident that our "people," both those directly involved with providing services, as well as our financial supporters and partners, have the ability and desire to push CMS to finally reach its true potential. I am honored to be part of this historic moment, and appreciate all my predecessors for getting us to the launch pad. --Chip

## Forgiveness Workshops for you to attend

### *The Power of Apology*

led by Ted Lewis and Rebecca Heirs

March 1, 9:30 to 12:00

This workshop will explore the power of apology to help restore healthy relationships between people in both personal and institutional settings. It will also look at how apologies can help people in a dispute regain their sense of dignity. Discussions will focus on the benefits of apologies, when apologies may be appropriate, and how to apologize effectively.

### *Exploring the Pathway to Forgiveness*

led by Rebecca Heirs

March 1, 1:00 to 5:00

Does saying, "I forgive you," always give us the relief that we seek? If only it were that easy! This workshop looks at forgiveness as a process, and examines the many steps that lead to true closure. Participants will be encouraged to think of someone that they would like to forgive; and using some exercises (that can be kept private, or shared with the group), they will explore the pathway that leads to forgiveness.

**Note:** This workshop requires signing up in advance, as there is a limit to the number of participants. Contact Ted Lewis at 344-5366 for pre-registration. I encourage a number of CMS volunteers and supporters to join in this workshop to ensure a good quorum of people.

#### Other workshops

*Forgiveness and Climate Change* by Tim Hicks

Feb. 23, 3:00 to 5:00

*Forgiveness in Mediation* by Rob Gould

Feb 29, 3:00 to 5:00

*Psychologists Panel on Forgiveness*

March 1, 1:00 to 3:00

ALL WORKSHOPS LISTED ABOVE ARE AT THE SHEDD (High St. and Broadway)

#### Also

*Interfaith Reconciliation* by Michele LeBaron  
At First Congregational Church (1050 E. 23<sup>rd</sup>, Eugene)

March 2, 4:00 to 6:30

(For more details, go to: [conflict.uoregon.edu/forgivenessproject](http://conflict.uoregon.edu/forgivenessproject))

V  
O  
L  
U  
N  
T  
E  
E  
R  
S

Please join us in our commitment to create a more peaceful community.

**Yes! I would like to tangibly support conflict resolution in my community,  
and enclosed is my gift to Community Mediation Services toward that end.**

\$500       \$250       \$100       \$50       \$20       Other: \$\_\_\_\_\_

All donations are tax deductible. Please make checks payable to:  
"Community Mediation Services"  
and send to: 769 Monroe Eugene, OR 97402

*Did you know that you can also contribute to CMS through United Way by designating your contribution?*

## We're updating our mailing list

Please call 344-5366 or email [donna@communitymediationservices.com](mailto:donna@communitymediationservices.com) with "CMS Newsletter" in the subject line to let us know ...

- ◆ If you want to be taken off the CMS mailing list or
- ◆ If you have a preference of receiving newsletters via e-mail.

## **Community Mediation Services**

769 Monroe  
Eugene, OR 97402