

AFCC NEWSLETTER



VOLUME 22, NUMBER 3

Association of Family and Conciliation Courts

SUMMER 2003

High Conflicts, Low Budgets St. Louis Welcomes the AFCC Midwest Regional Conference

Join your colleagues from around the country on November 13-15, 2003 for the informative sessions, knowledgeable speakers and dynamic networking opportunities at AFCC's Midwest Regional Conference at the Sheraton City Center in St. Louis! The conference theme is **High Conflicts, Low Budgets: Collaborative, Cost-Effective and Preventive Interventions for Separating and Divorcing Families**. Chief Justice Ronnie L. White of the Missouri Supreme Court will join AFCC President George Czutrin in welcoming delegates to the conference.

Conference sessions will address the challenges faced by courts, practitioners, independent agencies and families; as cases become more challenging, the cost of services rise and the resources continue to dwindle. Friday morning's plenary session, *High Conflicts, Low Budgets: The Dilemma for Family Courts and Private Practitioners*, will feature an interactive discussion including panelists and audience members moderated by William Howe, III, J.D. Panelists include: Lorraine Martin, M.S.W., Office of the Children's Lawyer; Diane Nunn, J.D., Director of California's Center for Families, Children & the Courts; Isolina Ricci, Ph.D., Author, *Mom's House, Dad's House*; Irwin Sandler, Ph.D., Prevention Research Center, Arizona State University; and Hon. Hugh E. Starnes, Fort Myers, FL.

Pre-conference institutes on Thursday, November 13, feature three full-day topics as well as separate morning and afternoon institutes. Half-day institutes are:

- *Assessing and Addressing Substance Abuse Issues in High Conflict Custody Disputes* (8:30am-12:00noon) presented by Claude Schleuderer, Ph.D., Kingston, NY
- *Reinventing Court Services* (1:00pm-4:30pm) presented by Stephen Grant,

M.A., Debra Kulak, M.S., Andrew Schepard, J.D. and Tom Weber, M.S.W.

Full-day institutes will take place from 9:00am-4:30pm and include:

- *Parenting Coordination for High Conflict Families*, presented by Christine Coates, J.D., M.Ed.; Betsy Barber Duvall, M.S.W.; and E. Robert LaCrosse, Ph.D.
- *Advanced Mediation Techniques*, presented by Larry S. Fong, Ph.D. and Arnold Shienvold, Ph.D.
- *Domestic Violence: Assessment, Access and Controversies*, presented by Leslie Drozd, Ph.D. and Philip Stahl, Ph.D.

Friday and Saturday will offer your choice of 23 workshops. Be sure to register with a colleague and plan to attend as many as possible, giving your organization a great return on investment when you apply information learned. Do you want to know the nuts and bolts of setting up a group treatment program for high-conflict parents? How about examining collaborative approaches to domestic violence or coordination of family services on shoe-string budgets? Would you be interested in helping parents develop a parenting plan? Other workshop topics include: unbundling legal services, interviewing children, services for separating and divorcing families, evaluation of court-related programs, cost-effective strategies for ending conflict, collaborative family law, impact and future implications of *Lawrence v. Texas*, parenting coordination legislation, child custody and visitation disputes, mediation verbal interventions, the divorce coach as alchemist, collaboration of mediator and GAL, using volunteers to reduce costs in private custody cases, hybridizing established programs, neutral exchange and court service programs.

During your leisure time you will find a lot to do in St. Louis (see related article on

page 11). The St. Louis Blues (the music, not the hockey team) can be heard nightly in the downtown entertainment district and in surrounding neighborhoods. The St. Louis music scene embraces jazz, rock, swing, reggae, as well as opera, so you can find the music to match your mood at one of the many clubs tucked away in the downtown area. Additionally, St. Louis is home to more than 1,000 one-of-a-kind restaurants

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St. Louis Conference Scholarships Available

AFCC will be offering five scholarships to the Midwest Regional Conference, November 13-15, 2003 at the Sheraton City Center in St. Louis. Scholarships will include registration fees for the conference and for one full-day pre-conference institute. Recipients are responsible for funding their own travel, lodging, meals and all other related expenses. All applicants must complete and return the application form to be eligible for consideration. Anyone may apply, however preference will be given to AFCC members. Applications may be downloaded from the conference page of the AFCC website (at www.afccnet.org) or requested from the AFCC administrative office by calling (608) 664-3750. The deadline for applications is October 6, 2003.



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The AFCC Newsletter is a publication of the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts. The newsletter is published four times a year. Deadlines for news items and advertising are March 1, June 1, September 1, and December 1. Advertising copy must be camera ready and payment made in U.S. funds.

Advertising Rates:

Full page (7 1/2" x 10") \$400

Half page (7 1/2" x 4 7/8") \$300

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



*Hon. George Czutrin
Hamilton, Ontario, Canada*

It is a pleasure, privilege and an honor to serve as President of AFCC for this upcoming year. I follow in the footsteps and the path created by many distinguished professionals, who have in the last forty years taken time from their busy professional lives to serve in leadership roles for this wonderful organization. Jan Shaw continued to show the way and served with distinction as President during this past year. She guided AFCC through a challenging year of transition as we moved successfully from the previous contractual arrangements to our new relationship with Executive Director Peter Salem and the wonderful staff at AFCC's administrative office.

I find it absolutely remarkable that people from all professions dealing with families and children, be it lawyers, mediators, judges and mental health professionals from all over the world, find the time and the tremendous energy to devote to leadership roles in AFCC.

I want to commence by congratulating Peter Salem on his recent marriage. Notwithstanding all the celebrations, he seems to find time to respond to e-mails from anywhere in the world at all hours and to faithfully and diligently discharge the duties of his position. He believes in AFCC. Congratulations Peter and Susanne and welcome, Susanne, to the AFCC family.

I would like to thank all the wonderful people who have agreed to share in leadership roles for the upcoming year as chairs and co-chairs of committees, task forces or special projects.

We are continuing to undertake new projects and I would like to make special mention of just a few of them.

Strategic planning initiatives will be a major focus in the upcoming year. In light of the new governance structure, new Executive Director and staff, it is crucial that we have a strong strategic plan for the short and long term. Former AFCC President Phil Bushard and a new member of the Board of Directors, Cori Erickson, were kind enough to agree to take on the responsibility together leading the strategic planning initiative. They will be aided by AFCC members and working with our consultant,

Maureen Robinson, who has assisted us in the past. Comments and suggestions from members are encouraged and will be solicited as part of the strategic planning process.

Hon. Arline Rotman (ret.), former AFCC President, has agreed to chair our Resource Development Committee and to look at what more we can do in this area. The Resource Development Committee has raised more than \$100,000 to support conference scholarships and youth programs. The Committee will be examining new ways to create a positive impact on AFCC, our members and the families we serve.

I am pleased to announce that I have appointed a Court Services Task Force. I am delighted to say that the Task Force will be chaired by Professor Barbara Babb, Director of the Center for Children, Families and the Courts at the University of Baltimore Law School. Our talented group of task force members includes Stephen Grant, Deputy Director II, Family Services, Connecticut Judicial Branch; Robert Smith, Colorado Office of Dispute Resolution; David Hodges, Family Court Services, Seattle, WA; AFCC Past President Jan Shaw; Risa Sheriff, Ontario Ministry of the Attorney General; Hon. Leonard Edwards, Santa Clara County, CA; Steve Baron, Director, Santa Clara County Family Court Services, and Phil Bushard, Director, Family Mediation Program, Reno, NV.

The idea for the task force came about because of what appears to be increasing challenges for those working in courts due to growing numbers of cases, more difficult clients and fewer resources. We are excited about this project and your input is encouraged.

It will come as no surprise to those who know me that I am always focused on enhancing AFCC's international membership, international presence and international involvement at all levels. Dr. Janet Walker of England was kind enough to agree to head a subcommittee of membership on international issues.

In my just returned trip to Australia I had the pleasure of attending the Family Court of Australia's Judge's Conferences. In meeting with the judges and speakers, including the Chief Justice of the Solomon Islands, our former President and soon to be retired Chief Justice Alastair Nicholson (congratulations Alastair), and judges from New Zealand, I was absolutely convinced that that our international educational opportunities need to be expanded.

The AFCC Task Force on Parenting Coordination has completed an outstanding report, which is posted on the member section of the AFCC website. Task Force Chair Christie Coates has been kind enough to offer to continue to take the lead for AFCC on Parenting Coordination issues. More details will follow.

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MEMBER PROFILE

AFCC President, Justice George Czutrin Hamilton, Ontario, Canada

This year, AFCC President George Czutrin celebrates his twentieth year as a member of the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts. While there have been many changes over the last two decades, some things seem to remain the same. "I first became involved with AFCC when I was a lawyer and I volunteered to be on the local planning committee for the AFCC Toronto conference in 1983," George said. Twenty years (and a just few gray hairs) later, George once again volunteered for an AFCC conference in Ontario. This time, however, as a Judge of the Ontario Superior Court of Justice, he chaired the conference and spearheaded volunteer efforts for AFCC's 40th Anniversary Conference in Ottawa. And this time the conference was a prelude to his term as AFCC President.

George was born in Nyiregyhaza, Hungary and lived there until he was seven years old. His family left Hungary in 1956 after the Hungarian revolution. "We traveled from Hungary to Austria and into Germany, and flew from Munich to New Jersey," George recalled. "We were temporarily housed in Army barracks, which served as a shelter for Hungarian refugees. We ended up in Poughkeepsie, New York."

The Czutrin family ultimately moved to Brooklyn where George grew up. After graduating from high school, he attended Brooklyn College where he not only majored in Education and English but he met his wife Lynne. They married after George graduated in 1973.

George taught junior high school while Lynne completed her degree. During that year George's parents and sister had moved across the border to Toronto to work in a family business and be closer to relatives. When George decided to apply to law school, family members encouraged him to look beyond New York and consider a move north. He decided to attend Osgoode Hall Law School in Toronto.

Following law school, Lynne and George remained in Canada. He articulated (a one year internship to learn the practical aspects of being a lawyer) with a Hamilton, Ontario law firm and studied for the bar exam while Lynne taught school.

George joined a small law firm as a general practitioner. Over time, he was able to devote more and more time to family law until his practice was exclusively in that area. "I really set out to practice family law," George said. "I've always had an interest in children, going back to when I was a teacher. Family law has been a way for me to continue helping children." George became a Certified Specialist in family law and the once small law firm grew to the point

where he headed up a small family law department.

In 1983 George and several AFCC colleagues were invited by former AFCC President Justice John VanDuzer to join the local planning committee for AFCC's Annual Conference in Toronto. "At that time there was no staff to plan conferences so all of the work was done by volunteers. John even recruited Lynne's students to make signs for each of the workshops. After the conference he came to her class, wearing his judicial robes, and talked to the children about what it is like to be a judge. That is one of my fondest AFCC memories."

In addition to his thriving legal practice, George taught the bar admissions course, served as President of the Hamilton Law Association and was a member of numerous committees including the Unified Family Court Rules Committee, the Canadian Bar Association Family Law Steering Committee and the Canadian Bar Association Joint Committee on Court Reform.

In 1993, George was appointed as a Judge of the Ontario Court of Justice to fill the shoes of Justice John VanDuzer. As a judge he has led a distinguished career, serving as Chair of the Chief Justices Committee on Unrepresented Litigants, Director of the Ontario Superior Court Judge's Association and a member of the Family Law Rules Committee, the Integrated Justice Family Test Team and the Civil Justice Review Family Law Implementation Committee.

While extremely active in his home Province of Ontario, George has also taken time to play a significant leadership role in AFCC. He was an instrumental part of AFCC's leadership review and restructuring of governance over the last four years and he has been a staunch advocate for international membership.

When not working, George and Lynne enjoy travel and have most recently been to Australia, Italy, France and Hungary. They have season theatre tickets and George is a die-hard sports fan (mostly Toronto teams but he confesses a continuing devotion to the New York Jets). George and Lynne have two children. Rachel is a second year student at the University of Western Ontario in London and is interested in studying psychology. Daniel is following in his father's footsteps, both as a second year law student at the University of Ottawa and as an AFCC volunteer, having assisted AFCC throughout the conference in Ottawa.

It should come as no surprise that George's children have between them an interdisciplinary focus on law and psychology. It is something that has been a part of

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AFCC COMMITTEE CHAIR PROFILE

Mary Ferriter, AFCC Treasurer, Boston MA



Mary Ferriter
AFCC Treasurer

As AFCC Treasurer, Mary Ferriter also serves as Chair of the Finance Committee. Having a strong financial structure to the organization and sound fiscal policies are crucial to the future viability of AFCC. Finances are the backbone of AFCC's programs and services and without the input from the AFCC Board of Directors and Committees, the Finance Committee cannot do its job.

Mary is in her second term as Treasurer and in that time has led the association through significant challenges. She inherited the results of a Board-approved deficit budget for 2001-2002, the impact of which was compounded by the cancellation of the New York Regional Conference due to the September 11 tragedy. The slumping economy, which has caused many courts and public agencies to cut dues and training budgets, and dramatic administrative and governance changes within AFCC also put significant dents in the AFCC budget.

The good news is that by the end of her first year, Mary and her Finance Committee helped AFCC rebound, putting the association back on sound financial footing. AFCC's financial success in tough economic times—when many other associations are cutting back or raising dues—was a result of careful monitoring of expenses and the loyalty and commitment of AFCC members, who continued to attend conferences and keep up their memberships. According to Mary, AFCC members recognize that the money they spend on conferences and membership continues to be an important investment in their practice.

This year's Finance Committee members include Hon. George Czutrin, AFCC President; Leslye Hunter, President Elect; Hon. Hugh Starnes, Vice President/Secretary; Robert Smith, AFCC Board Member; and Executive Director Peter Salem. They will work together to develop a budget for the coming year and to develop and recommend fiscal policies, procedures and goals for the organization.

Mary's role as AFCC Treasurer has been preceded by terms as the Treasurer of the Massachusetts Chapter of AFCC and

Treasurer of the Boston Council of the Jimmy Fund. The fiscal watchdog role does not come naturally to her and Mary confesses that she wishes she used the more conservative accounting and spending habits in doing her personal budgets that she employs when reviewing the expenses and planning for organizations.

Born and reared: I was born and reared in Holyoke, Massachusetts, in the western part of the state. I graduated from Holyoke Catholic High School.

Education: I attended Lesley College in Cambridge and was planning to pursue a teaching career with special needs students. Somehow teaching became overshadowed by politics and following a stint as an intern on Beacon Hill (Massachusetts' equivalent to Capitol Hill), I changed my major to human services with a focus on policy issues. After college I spent a summer as a support vehicle driver for a group of sixty-five bicyclists who rode from Boston to Los Angeles to raise money for World Hunger. After returning from the West Coast, I attended Suffolk University School of Law. After graduation I began working at the Administrative Office of the Massachusetts Probate and Family Court where I spent 13 years working on a variety of Court issues and policies. I also have a Master's degree in Public Administration from the McCormack Institute at the University of Massachusetts.

Current Job: Since 2001 I have been an associate at Pakenham, Schmidt & Federico, P.C., a domestic relations law firm in Boston, Massachusetts where I currently practice.

Goals: Spend more time doing things I want to do, not have to do.

First AFCC Conference: The 1994 Parent Education Congress in Chicago. I was awe-struck by the collaboration and collegiality of the group gathered. It made implementation of parenting education programs in Massachusetts much easier because there was always someone to contact for more information.

Career other than my own that I would love to have: Caterer, decorator, party planner.

Family: I am one of four children: Three lawyers and a doctor (we always knew he was different). I have four nephews and one niece.

Teacher: There are a number of people who, although not titled "teacher," have had a teaching role in my life. I view most people with whom I have contact as "teachers." They either provide me with information about the world or I learn something about myself.

Favorite AFCC Memories:

The dynamic families that have addressed the AFCC audiences. I remember the Washington, D.C., conference in 1998 that featured Marian Wright Edelman and Peter Edelman. It was quite moving watching the proud parents as their son Jonah joined them giving a plenary address. Also, Sheila and Sen. Paul Wellstone when they presented at the 2000 Annual Conference in New Orleans. The electricity and excitement in the room after the address was palpable and left the audience with the inspiration that is needed to face the realities of practice every day.

Best thing about AFCC: The connections that I have with those who have been there and done it, and the willingness of AFCC members to share information and materials.

National Honors for CFCC

The California Administrative Office of the Courts' Center for Families, Children & the Courts (CFCC) has won the 2003 Hodson Award for Public Service from the American Bar Association. The Hodson Award is presented annually by the ABA's Government and Public Sector Lawyers Division to an outstanding government or public sector law office that best exemplifies the spirit of public service.

Programs developed by the CFCC include the establishment of family law facilitators in every California county to assist unrepresented parents in child support proceedings; activity books in English and Spanish that teach children about the court system; plain language forms to assist individuals in adoption and domestic violence proceedings; the award-winning Online Self-Help Center with instructions in English and Spanish; and a court and community strategic planning project.

The ABA division presented the award in August to Mr. William C. Vickrey, Administrative Director of the California Courts, and Ms. Diane Nunn, Director of the Center for Families, Children & the Courts.

Diane Nunn, J.D., will be a presenter at the AFCC Midwest Regional Conference, November 13-15, 2003, in St. Louis.

ASSOCIATION OF FAMILY AND CONCILIATION COURTS

Call for Presenters
AFCC's 41st Annual Conference

**BEST INTERESTS REVISITED:
CHALLENGING OUR ASSUMPTIONS**

May 12–15, 2004
Adam's Mark on the Riverwalk
San Antonio, Texas

The term "best interests of the children" is used as a legal standard, in research and professional literature and in everyday conversation between professionals and their clients. While everyone agrees that they want what is in the best interests of children, there are often serious disagreements about exactly what that is. This conference is an opportunity for judges, lawyers, mental health professionals, mediators, researchers and others to explore best interests of children, revisit our definitions and challenge our assumptions.

Preliminary Topics:

Best Interests and Parenting Plans	International Custody Disputes
Children's Preferences in Custody Disputes	Special Programs for Children
Cultural Diversity and Best Interests	Custody Evaluation
Parenting Coordination	Best Interests and Family Violence
Child Support	Mediation
Legal Representation for Children	Programs for High Conflict Parents
Children in Mediation	Interviewing Children for Judges & Lawyers
Collaborative Family Law	Judicial Settlement Processes
Relocation	Best Interests in Child Protection

AFCC is accepting proposals for ninety-minute workshop sessions including, but not limited to, the topics listed above. If you are interested in presenting a workshop, please send the following information: (1) an abstract of 200 words or less describing your proposed workshop; (2) a one-page outline of your proposed workshop; (3) three learning objectives that will be addressed by your proposed workshop; (4) name, address, telephone and fax numbers, and email addresses **for all proposed presenters**; (5) resumes for all proposed presenters; (6) name, address, telephone and fax numbers, and email address of two professional references. *Maximum of four panelists per workshop.*

Please note that the deadline for proposals is November 17, 2003. AFCC is unable to guarantee consideration of incomplete proposals or those submitted after the deadline. AFCC offers a reduced registration fee for conference workshop presenters and is unable to reimburse travel and related expenses. Please mail, fax or email proposals to: AFCC, Conference Proposal, 6515 Grand Teton Plaza, Ste. 210, Madison, WI 53719-1048, Phone: (608) 664-3750, Fax: (608) 664-3751, Email: afcc3@afccnet.org (Word or WordPerfect attachment only please).

Parenting Without Conflict

by Sherrie Kibler-Sanchez, LCSW,
Van Nuys, CA

Parenting Without Conflict (formerly the Pre-Contempt/Contemnors Group Diversion Education/Counseling Program) is a court-based program in Los Angeles County offered by Family Court Services. The program is free of charge to participants and is designed to assist high-conflict parents to shift their focus onto their children's best interests and needs; the benefits of cooperative or at least positive parallel parenting; the merits of proactive, issue-based communication; and techniques for collaborative problem-solving. Access to the program is by judicial order only.

The program serves the diverse socioeconomic and ethnic population of Los Angeles County, where there are nine million people and approximately 45,000 petitions for dissolution of marriage or petitions to establish parental rights. It was developed in response to those parents who continue to have serious interpersonal and communication problems that affect the emotional and psychological well being of their children. The basic premise of the program is optimistic and change-oriented, with a presumption that information and education empowers parents to make better decisions for themselves and their children and to better understand the needs of children experiencing parental separation and divorce. Those eligible for the program are parents who repeatedly litigate custody and visitation of their child(ren), who *do not* have significant, severe domestic violence, mental illness, or current substance abuse issues.

The program goals are to help parents:

- Understand their children's reaction to divorce and separation at each developmental stage;
- Understand how conflict between parents negatively impacts their children;
- Develop techniques for successful communication and co-parenting skills; and
- Practice and model positive conflict resolution skills.

The program is designed to meet the needs of (1) parenting partners who have the ability to be in the same room together and to work as a parenting team and (2) parents who have domestic violence restraining orders or who are not able to be in the same room together and cannot work as a parenting team. The small group format is for parents who fall in the first category and the large group format is for parents who fall in the second category.

Both groups are currently held simultaneously at the Stanley Mosk Courthouse in downtown Los Angeles on Wednesdays.

Parking is free-of-charge and men and women park in separate facilities. There is a metal detector at the entrance to the courthouse and bailiff coverage is provided throughout the sessions. Children are not permitted to attend either the large or the small group sessions. The large group meets for three consecutive sessions from 3:30pm-6:30pm and the small groups meet for six consecutive sessions from 4:00pm-6:30pm. There is an emphasis on providing gender-balanced facilitation teams, although this is not always possible. Family Court Services facilitation staff conduct domestic violence screening by telephone to determine if the parenting partners are appropriate to participate in a small group setting.

The large group format is relatively unchanged from prior years and consists primarily of lectures, videos and limited small group exercises. While some education materials are similar to those in the small group, the large group participants do not have handbooks or the benefit of interacting directly with their co-parenting partner.

At the beginning of the small group series, participants are asked to sign a confidentiality statement and both groups complete a participant data sheet, providing name, address, phone numbers, and the same information for an individual who will know their whereabouts should they relocate, along with the name of the judicial officer referring them and why they were referred to the program.

The small group format includes handouts and a work book; didactic presentations by facilitators; direct interaction with facilitators and parenting partners; interactive group experiences; skills development; dyad exercises; homework assignments; and multiple video presentations, including "Family Transitions: Young Children Speak their Minds About Divorce," "Children—The Experts on Divorce," "After the Storm," "Don't Divorce the Children," and "Parents Putting Children in the Middle."

The small group format maximizes the facilitators' ability to encourage and draw out parental participation and self-disclosure regarding common circumstances and experiences that create conflict and impasse for parents. It also allows for participants to empathically confront, encourage, and support one another based on their connection of common experience. A mediation session is offered to participants following the small group series.

In summary, participants learn the following from the program:

- Impact of divorce/separation on children;
- Children's reaction to divorce/separation at each developmental stage;

- Impact of post divorce/separation conflict on children;
- Long term impact on children who are caught in loyalty conflicts;
- Legal divorce: Best interests presumption, definition of legal and physical custody;
- Emotional divorce: Redefining relationships and roles as parents;
- Stages of grief and the process of letting go;
- Creating a businesslike relationship;
- Qualities of a successful co-parenting relationship;
- Standards of conduct for a working relationship;
- Ground rules for parental cooperation;
- Effective communication;
- Understanding anger;
- Why conflicts happened in the past and how to prevent future conflicts; and
- Conflict management techniques.

This program is continually under revision and is modified based on the current literature, research and comments from participating parents. Ongoing research on the effectiveness of various types of education programs for high-conflict families continues to be important.

Relitigation rates cannot be the benchmark of success of these types of programs. A more appropriate and useful benchmark might be a greater emphasis on the measurable benefits to families and children and the protection of children from the reduction of conflict, enhanced communication and cooperative parenting skills based on a knowledge of child development and the general and specific needs of their children, use of supportive and educational community services, understanding the impact of conflict on children, and a greater understanding of what children need when their parents are going through divorce and separation.

There is a great need for low-cost, community-based programs in diverse geographic areas for high conflict parents involved in separation and divorce. This is one program dedicated to assisting parents in restructuring their co-parenting relationship to address their parental conflict and the negative impact on their children and to focus on their children's best interests and needs. It is hoped this article will inspire others to create programs that are vital to separating and divorcing families and children.

Wyoming Children's Access Network: From a Vision to Reality

by Will Clark, WyCAN Program Development Officer, Sheridan, Wyoming

If every altruistic idea came to fruition, and all potential social service agencies that have been imagined in the hearts and minds of civic-oriented individuals were successfully established and sufficiently funded, our world would be a far better place. In that world, there would be no child abuse or neglect, a first-rate education would be available to all, drugs would only be used to cure disease, violence would be non-existent and children would have two loving and devoted parents to care for and nurture their well-being. Unfortunately, all one needs to dispel any notion of that reality is read on the front page of any newspaper. However, there is always hope.

This expectation for a better future for children is what keeps many individuals striving for the often times, seemingly elusive, optimal future of hope for our children and their society.

Successfully establishing non-profit social service agencies requires more than just the demand for them. It takes dedication from individuals willing to make sacrifices and persevere through unforeseen complications. Cori Erickson, Executive Director of the Wyoming Children's Access Network (WyCAN) and a member of the AFCC Board of Directors, through an unwavering belief in her convictions, and a tenacious personality, simply would not let her vision die. This vision is to provide services to the parents who share children, but do not live in the same home, and give them hope for an extraordinary future for their children.

WyCAN was incorporated in late 1998 and first offered services in May of 1999. WyCAN, a non-profit private agency, strives to protect the best interests of both the children and parents of divorce, separation, and unmarried situations by promoting the healthy development of such children and preserving strong parent-child relationships for both biological parents when appropriate and practical. WyCAN's primary services are an innovative early-intervention parent-education seminar that empowers parents with the skills and information that enable them to keep their children out of the middle of conflict they may have with the other biological parent. WyCAN also provides mediation to assist in the development of parenting plans, a reference center and a referral and consultative resource. While these services may not be new to other jurisdictions, they are new to Wyoming, where WyCAN has the first and still the only parent education seminar of its kind in the state.

Originally offered in the Sheridan community and serving 71 parents in its first

year of operation, WyCAN now offers classes in eight other communities throughout the state and in 2002 served over 1,150 parents through its parenting seminar. This astronomical growth did not come easily. According to Cori, establishing a nonprofit is like starting any small business. It takes time, persistence, and dedication. It was necessary to determine exactly what services were needed and the best way to provide them. A great deal of research went into the initial stages of the project. Cori spoke to hundreds of lawyers, judges, mental health professionals and others, both in and outside of Wyoming. Fortunately, from the start she was directed towards the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts. While she had to do a lot of research in the state of Wyoming to determine what was available and what was not available for these families, the expertise was not to be found within the state of Wyoming to develop this program. "AFCC took me from zero to sixty in the development of the WyCAN program quite rapidly," Cori said. "The expertise and steadfast dedication of those who are members of the AFCC, along with their willingness to share everything, an incredible WyCAN board of directors and a great team of service providers with WyCAN gave me the ability to bring WyCAN to fruition."

Wyoming is considered the frontier for obvious reasons. While assistance from AFCC members in other parts of the country proved vital, it was critical that WyCAN programs be designed to meet the needs of the local population. Cori tailored the parent education program to meet this state's frontier needs. Since Wyoming is geographically large, yet has a very small population and scarce resources, it would be fiscally impossible to provide three or more types of parent education to the bi-nuclear family. The WyCAN parent education is designed to meet the needs of high conflict parents, the general divorcing population and never-married parents. There are many ways this is accomplished in the curriculum, but mainly the emphasis was taken off "divorce" and placed on parental responsibility and the harm of conflict. This helps attract the never-married population. To further address local needs, all activities are coordinated through WyCAN headquarters in Sheridan, thus reducing overhead.

WyCAN operates in a climate of scarce resources, with low fees and with no financial support from Wyoming courts or state funds. Initially, it was able to get a small amount of Access/Visitation federal funds to start up the program. When these funds were gone there was enough momentum to keep the services going. Funding for WyCAN was virtually non-existent for about one year and hard to come by at first. Even without resources for a period of time, Cori

knew there was potential and she was determined to make the program a success.

According to Cori, as a result of the positive outcomes on the data collected, WyCAN was able to begin acquisition of other funding from various federal and private sources. "There are numerous sources of funding available, but it takes time to research and write proposals," Cori said. "It is essential to have solid data to support your cause. Also, if you do not get funding from a source one year...don't give up, try again and again."

When Cori faced monetary and philosophical resistance during the course of developing the WyCAN program, she recalled what a very wise man once said to her: Always appear pleased, proud and happy. Word of mouth and the positive accolades from individuals who have come into contact with the WyCAN services have proven invaluable. Especially in a state where you travel four hundred miles to the other side, are getting gas for your car, and you are talking to your neighbor.

AFCC Dollars



Would you like the opportunity to earn AFCC dollars to spend on conference registrations, membership renewals or to buy publications?

It's easy!!!! You will earn TEN AFCC DOLLARS for each first-time member who joins AFCC and names you as the referral source on the membership application form. They must be a brand new, first-time member to qualify. Each time your name is given as the referral source for a first time member AFCC will note it in your file and at the beginning of each year you will receive a credit.

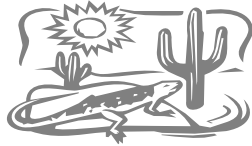
You can earn up to 150 AFCC Dollars, enough for a free membership each year! An AFCC membership is not a hard sell. Just explain to your colleague why YOU find your membership valuable, and you are most of the way there. If you can convey how a membership would enhance your colleague's practice, provide access to learn from and network with the groundbreakers in our field, as well as being identified as one of the leaders in our field who is concerned with excellence and being on the cutting edge in their practice, make sure you have a membership application brochure (with your name in the referral space) ready to be filled out! Or refer colleagues to the AFCC website at www.afccnet.org.

Call the AFCC office (608) 664-3750 to request membership brochures now, and start earning AFCC Dollars today!

AFCC Chapter Update

Arizona

The Arizona AFCC 2004 Annual Conference will be held February 6-8, 2004 in Sedona—the scenic red rock area north of Phoenix, east of Prescott and south of Flagstaff. The conference theme is “Childhood Interrupted” and the location is the Hilton Sedona Resort. Hotel information can be found at: www.hiltonsedona.com and registration information will be available in November at the Arizona Chapter website: www.azafcc.org.



California

The California Chapter has issued a Call for Presenters for the AFCC-Cal Conference at the Omni Hotel in Los Angeles, February 20-22, 2004. The conference theme is “21st Century Solutions for 21st Century Families: Developing Best Practices.” AFCC-Cal is accepting proposals for presentations on issues of interest to judges, lawyers, family court services and private practice mediators, evaluators and parent educators working with families of divorce and separation. Topics include: *Impact of Divorce on Children • Mediation • Evaluation • Special Mastering • Collaborative Family Law • Parent Education • Litigated Cases • Representing Parents • Representing Children • Parenting Plans • Parentage Issues • Non-Parent Visitation • Relocation • Never-Married Parents • High Conflict • Changing Laws • Court Administration • Self-Represented Litigants • Domestic Violence • Interstate and International Custody Issues • Research • Court Reform • Working With the Legislature • Custody Appellate Practice • Multi-Cultural Issues • Special Needs Children and Divorce ... and more*



Panels are limited to three members. If you are interested in presenting a 90-minute workshop, a half-day special institute or a full-day special institute, send a one-paragraph abstract, a one-page outline, the goals and learning objectives of the presentation and a resume and contact information for each proposed presenter to the AFCC-Cal Conference Planning Committee, c/o Leslie Ellen Shear at email: custodymatters@earthlink.net in Microsoft Word or WordPerfect.

Florida

More than 200 participants attended the Florida Chapter's third annual program, “Florida Parenting Coordination Training and Legislative Forum,” in Orlando on August 15-16, 2003. Featured national experts and members of AFCC were Barbara Bartlett, Esq., Matthew J. Sullivan, Ph.D. and Philip Stahl, Ph.D. Modeling the value of cooperation encouraged by AFCC, the Florida Chapter and its Parenting Coordination Interest Group collaborated with the Florida Bar, the Florida Dispute Resolution Center, and other state and professional organizations to develop a statute, rules and professional standards for the growing field of parenting coordination. The legislative materials were presented during this successful statewide summit.



Plans are already being made for the 2004 Florida Chapter AFCC Conference, to take place in November 2004.

The first three annual conference activities were well attended and financially successful, a direct result of substantial time and planning through the efforts of Linda Fieldstone and her committee, including the invaluable assistance of Greg Firestone, Past President, and many Chapter Board members who have been tirelessly devoted to chapter activities.

The Florida Chapter is proud of its accomplishments and of the participation of its members in AFCC activities, including Hon. Hugh Starnes, as AFCC Vice President/Secretary and Linda Fieldstone, Board member and Chapter Council Liaison. Hugh and Linda will

ascend to President and President-Elect of the Florida Chapter on January 1, 2004.

Florida's greatest asset as a Chapter is its competent and dedicated Board of Directors: Hon. Ray McNeal and Hon. Hugh Starnes, two leading Family Law Jurists in Florida; Deborah Day, forensic psychologist from Orlando; Greg Firestone, mediator, trainer and psychologist from Tampa; Shelly Finman, leading authority on Cooperative Law; Sharon Press, Director of the Florida Dispute Resolution Center; Joanne Holt, CPA, who with Bob Matheson, CDP, have led the way in Florida for involvement of financial professionals in AFCC; Marsha Freeman, associate Professor of Law at Barry Law School; Norberto Katz, General Master in Orlando; and Mercedes McGowen, Ph. D., psychologist from Jacksonville, who is the Board Secretary.

AFCC Florida Chapter members include Florida Supreme Court Justice Barbara Pariente, and many other dedicated family law jurists throughout Florida. Collaborative Law groups have been forming over the past two years as well as local multidisciplinary groups in Fort Myers, Naples and Sarasota/Bradenton. All of this activity has created a ground swell of enthusiasm and leadership in making Florida a prime innovator in Court programs and systems helping families through the maze of the Family Law process.

Missouri

Members of Missouri AFCC have been busy with local and regional events! The Kansas City work group held a July 9th Lunch and Learn on the topic of “Collaborative Law: What are the Roles?” Speakers were attorney mediators Hugh O'Donnell and Jack Cochran. The St. Louis work group is planning a Lunch and Learn on September 10th, on the topic of “Domestic Violence and Family Law”; presenters will be Professor Jane Aiken, Washington University Law School, and the Honorable Thomas Frawley, St. Louis City Family Court. Missouri Chapter members are also eagerly anticipating hosting the AFCC Fall Regional Conference November 13-15, 2003! It promises to be an exciting and stimulating event!



New York

The AFCC-NY Chapter is excited to present its Second Annual Fall Conference, “Sex, Lies and Family Law: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue for Change.” The one-day conference is scheduled for Friday, November 21, 2003, at the New York State Judicial Institute, Pace University, White Plains, New York. Statewide Administrative Judge, Matrimonial Matters, Hon. Jacqueline W. Silbermann, will present an overview and retrospective on the Tenth Anniversary of the Matrimonial Rules in New York State. Following will be a discussion and dialogue with attendees about ideas and recommendations for changes in the future. The afternoon will be devoted to workshops on parent coordinators/special masters; parenting plans; parent education and collaborative law and ADR alternatives. For further information, please contact Justice Evelyn Frazee at efrazee@courts.state.ny.us or (585) 428-2486.



Texas

The AFCC Texas Chapter announces a new URL for its web page: www.texasafcc.org.

The Chapter is busy planning for its two-day conference October 24-25, 2003, for legal and mental health professionals working with high conflict families. “High Conflict Families” features keynote speaker, Joan B. Kelly, Ph.D., and will be held at The Harvey Hotel, located near the Dallas/Fort Worth Airport. For more information, contact Scott Clarke at (214) 415-3370; email: scott.d.clarke@aexp.com or go to: www.texasafcc.org.



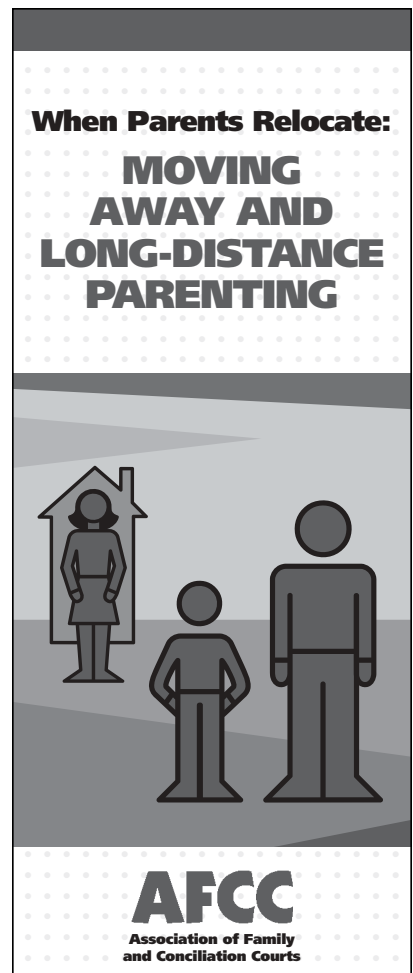
When Parents Relocate: Moving Away and Long-Distance Parenting

This new pamphlet for parents, available from the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts, examines the issues that arise when a parent decides to relocate. It sensitively addresses how parents can balance the needs of children with the decision to move and provides useful information on long-distance parenting when one parent lives far away from their children.

When Parents Relocate: Moving Away and Long-Distance Parenting provides tips to parents, including the following steps to take to balance your children's needs with your right as a parent:

1. Consider what your children are thinking and feeling. What effect will long distances have on your children?
2. Consider ways to reduce risk that accompanies the loss of attachment.
3. Decide how each parent will continue to be involved in their children's lives.
4. Develop a parenting plan that addresses the unique issues of parenting at a distance.
5. Discuss with the other parent when each parent will spend time with the children.
6. Consider and discuss methods of travel between homes and whether the children will need adult accompaniment on airline, train or bus trips.
7. Discuss communications between parents and also ways to stay connected to your children from a distance. Keep the focus on the children's needs.
8. Telephone, e-mail, instant messaging, faxes, photos, videotapes, mail and audiotapes offer creative ways to maintain contact. Discuss with the other parent who will be responsible for the cost of any communication charges.
9. Establish holiday plans or new traditions so the children will have important anchors.
10. Work together to honor your children's right to meaningful relationships with both parents.

AFCC offers eleven new and newly revised pamphlets to help parents and children experiencing issues related to separation and divorce. Discounts are available for orders of more than 1,000 pamphlets. For a complete list of pamphlets and pricing, or to order, go to the AFCC website at www.afccnet.org or contact the office at (608) 664-3750 or afcc@afccnet.org.



St. Louis Conference

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ranging from intimate Italian trattorias to time-tested gourmet establishments. St. Louis invented the ice cream cone and iced tea for the 1904 World's Fair and is preparing to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the World's Fair and Olympic Games.

Friday night is your opportunity to take a break from the conference and "Experience St. Louis" with friends and colleagues. Descriptions and sign-up sheets for a variety of venues will be available on site.

Do you need continuing education credits? AFCC is approved by the American Psychological Association to offer continuing education for psychologists. Additionally, application has been made for continuing legal education and social work contact hours.

The conference hotel, the Sheraton City Center, is located downtown, just off Highway 40/I-64, across from the Savvis Center and MetroLink Station. For reservations at the special AFCC rate of \$115 for a single or double room, contact the Sheraton City Center at (314) 231-5007 or toll-free at (888) 627-8096. MetroLink, the St. Louis region's light rail system, connects you to the airport, downtown area, hotels, restaurants, cultural institutions and sporting events. Contact (314) 982-1494 to order copies of the handy MetroLink Visitors' Guide. Schedules and more information are accessible via the Internet at www.bi-state.org.

For additional information on AFCC's Midwest Regional Conference in St. Louis, please go to www.afccnet.org for a copy of the conference program and on-line registration. If you would like a copy sent to you, contact AFCC at (608) 664-3750 or afcc@afccnet.org.

What are You Doing Now?

AFCF Newsletter's Member News Column wants to know! AFCC members are interested in keeping up with what their colleagues are up to and the AFCC Newsletter wants to help. If you have written a book, earned a promotion, accepted a new job, earned an honor or other distinction or have some other exciting news to share, please let us know. Simply email Candace Walker, AFCC Program Director and Newsletter Editor at cwalker@afccnet.org, fax to (608) 664-3751 or send your notice to AFCC, 6515 Grand Teton Plaza, Suite 210, Madison, WI 53719-1048.

Using Email to Help Separated Parents Communicate

by Gary Drenfeld, MSW, RSW, Interaction Consultants,
Dundas, Ontario

Communication between separated or divorced parents can be problematic. Depending on the age, health and circumstances of the child, these parents may find it necessary to communicate with each other anywhere from several times daily to at least weekly. The ties and demands of parenthood require parents to maintain a connection and communicate.

For some parents, unresolved or ongoing conflict cause communications to degenerate, which only leads to more difficulties. With this in mind, several strategies are often suggested, such as telephone contact or written notes via a communication book. Both of these strategies can be problematic.

The telephone requires hearing the emotional tone of the conversation and because of the immediacy of the message, can easily lead to the conversation degenerating. Sometimes one parent will tape the conversations for use in court, but then it becomes questionable if this party goaded the other to increase conflict for the taped conversation. Further, clandestine taping inflames the already bad feelings of the other parent who may seek retribution.

Communication books or notes have the benefit of providing a permanent record and keeps the parents apart, but poses two other concerns. The first is that parents usually rely on the child to act as courier. This places the child directly in the middle of the parental conflict and often subjects the child to the immediate emotional response of the parent as they read the message. Second, if the message is only delivered at the time of access, this makes planning difficult. Quite often, communication requires a back and forth dialogue to accomplish agreements as simple as access arrangements. When using notes or a communication book, the messages often take the form of directives from one parent to the other with the alternate parent feeling either controlled or lacking input into decisions. So as a solution, this too can contribute to ongoing conflict between parents.

Enter Email. Email provides an alternative communication tool to help parents transmit a message. It allows thinking or a cooling off period prior to replying and provides for a permanent record. The use of email keeps the communication away from the child and removes some of the emotional impact carried by voice. Because parents can respond back and forth, it also allows for discussion and dialogue and so reduces the risk of one parent just providing directives as in the case of the communication book. The email trail can be reviewed if one or other parent has missed a point and also serves as a clear reference if a parent forgets the content of an agreement. The electronic record, known to both, can easily be printed by either and as such, both are more likely to remain on good behavior knowing the record can be used in court or otherwise be made public.

Next time separated parents in conflict need to chat about their child where conflict exists, try email and consider these guidelines:

1. Stick to the issues.
2. Keep the language clean and appropriate. No insults and no name-calling.
3. Prepare and save your message. Wait 1-24 hours to review and edit before sending or replying. Upon reflection, you may want to make changes.
4. Keep a record and back-up these files.
5. Password-protect these files to keep them out of view of your child.
6. Remember, these emails can be used in court and your child may still gain access. Do not act in a way that can be used against you.

Emails are not the same as therapy. As a communication strategy this is not recommended to necessarily make a poor situation better, but it is suggested as a potential solution to keep a poor situation from getting worse. In the event that there are court ordered restrictions on face-to-face or voice contact, email may provide a reasonable solution for parents to still communicate.

President's Message

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My active involvement in AFCC's 40th Anniversary Conference in Ottawa gave me a unique opportunity to appreciate the significant amount of volunteer effort that goes into an AFCC conference. I want to thank all of those—too numerous to mention—who were involved in making the Ottawa conference such a success in light of the challenges that none of us could have possibly foreseen.

As always, during conversations in the halls, over lunch, or otherwise, questions and suggestions come up as to how we decide conference locations, conference topics, speakers and a variety of AFCC issues. We encourage these inquiries and suggestions, not only at conferences. If you have a question or comment, I want to encourage you to email our office at afcc@afccnet.org. I want to assure you that as an AFCC member, we will take your input seriously and do our best to answer your questions.

Member Profile, George Crutzin

continued from page 3

their father's life for the last twenty years. "Frankly, I joined AFCC in 1983 simply because John VanDuzer asked. I didn't know what the attraction was. But after going to the conference and seeing the interdisciplinary and international nature of the organization I knew that it would help with my work.

"AFCC is important because it provides a forum for an exchange of ideas, regardless of what those ideas are. I've long had concerns about civility in our profession, and the lack of respect that professionals sometimes show one another. It is clear to me that no one profession has all the answers.

Our goal should be to listen to one another's ideas with respect. I think one of the greatest strengths of AFCC is that we have the opportunity to hear so many diverse perspectives from members of other disciplines and citizens of other countries. As a board member I've heard concerns about conference presentations or newsletter or journal articles. I try to remind everyone that AFCC has a forty-year history of creating opportunities for new ideas. To foster creative thinking we need to listen carefully, especially to ideas with which we may not agree. We are usually better off for having listened."



Ten Things to See and Do in St. Louis

There's More Than Meets the Arch...

There's so much to see and do in St. Louis, here are just ten of the hundreds of ways you can explore St. Louis for yourself:

- 1** Explore the free attractions in Forest Park: the Zoo, Art Museum, Science Center, History Museum, and the giant sculptures in Turtle Playground.
- 2** Visit St. Louis' historic neighborhoods—Mangia bene! Eat well on The Hill, St. Louis' Italian neighborhood; Shop for art and unique boutique items and enjoy a variety of excellent dining options in the Central West End; Stroll the Souldard neighborhood for lunch, nightlife, marketing, or a brewery tour; Take in urban revitalization with more art galleries and nightlife on Washington Avenue.
- 3** Stroll through an authentic Japanese Garden or a tropical rain forest at the Missouri Botanical Garden.
- 4** Follow the 1804 adventures of explorers Lewis & Clark at museums, historic sites and the confluence of the Mississippi and Missouri rivers.
- 5** Find out how good feeling bad can be when you visit St. Louis' blues, rock, folk, and jazz music clubs.
- 6** Ride to the top of the Gateway Arch for a 30-mile bird's eye view of St. Louis and stroll the Mississippi riverfront.

7 Free your inner child at the Magic House, City Museum, Grant's Farm, Transportation Museum, Purina Farms and other kid-friendly attractions.

8 Discover the past at the Old Courthouse and The Black World History Museum.

9 See Union Station, once the world's largest train station, now boasts 80 shops and restaurants. Stunning architecture in Grand Hall.

10 For the weekend of November 14th: Enjoy the beautiful St. Louis fall weather and foliage; See *Starlight Express*, a Broadway Series theatre performance at the The Fox Theatre; attend a St. Louis Symphony Orchestra concert at Powell Hall; or screen a film at the *12th Annual St. Louis International Film Festival*.

* Easily accessible by the Metro Link and/ or Shuttle Bug, St. Louis' light rail system with a station just across the street from the Sheraton City Center.

** A short ride from hotel.

*** Walking distance from hotel.

More information: <http://www.explorestlouis.com>



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Upcoming Events

AFCC Texas Chapter 2003 Conference

October 24-25, 2003
DFW Airport Area, Texas
www.texasafcc.org

AFCC Midwest Regional Conference

November 13-15, 2003
Sheraton St. Louis City Center
St. Louis, Missouri
www.afccnet.org

AFCC New York Chapter Second Annual Conference

November 21, 2003
NY State Judicial Institute, Pace University
White Plains, New York
Contact: Justice Evelyn Frazee at efrazee@courts.state.ny.us

AFCC Arizona Chapter Conference

February 6-8, 2004
Hilton Sedona Resort and Spa
Sedona, Arizona
www.azafcc.org

AFCC California Chapter Conference

February 20-22, 2004
Downtown Omni Hotel
Los Angeles, California
www.afcc-cal.org

AFCC 41st Annual Conference

May 12-15, 2004
Adam's Mark on the Riverwalk
San Antonio, Texas
www.afccnet.org

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Co-author, *Working with
High Conflict Families*

Philip Stahl, Ph.D.

Author, *Complex Issues in
Custody Evaluations*

Larry S. Fong, Ph.D.

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Professor Andrew Schepard

Editor, *Family Court Review*