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## IN THIS ISSUE

- President's Message
- AFCC 15th Symposium on Child Custody
- Conversation Corner with Sherry Cassedy
- Webinar Corner
- 60th Annual Conference - Call for Proposals
- Chapter News
- AFCC Member News

## President's Message

### Can You Feel It?

*Hon. Linda Fidnick*

Did you feel it at AFCC's Annual Conference in Chicago? Feel the energy? Feel the excitement? I most certainly did, and I suspect that it was due in large part to the collective joy of emerging together from the long dark tunnel of the pandemic. This conference was, as all AFCC conferences are, a chance to reconnect with colleagues and friends we hadn't seen for a while— although this time, for most in attendance, it was years instead of months. But the most exciting part of the event for me-- and I know that I also speak for the rest of the Board-- was seeing and meeting so many new faces. It was especially gratifying to see after some significant efforts during the pandemic, a younger and more diverse crowd, which reflects the ongoing growth and change that is the lifeblood of AFCC.



[Read More](#)

**15th Symposium on Child Custody**  
*Las Vegas, Nevada*  
*November 10-12, 2022*



**Presenting Sponsor**



**SOBERLINK**

**AFCC Chapter Conferences**

**AFCC Minnesota Annual Conference**

July 28-29, 2022  
Minneapolis, MN / Virtual

**AFCC Florida Annual Conference**

September 21-23, 2022

# 15th Symposium on Child Custody



## From a Full House to Parenting Apart

November 10-12, 2022

Planet Hollywood Resort and Casino

Las Vegas, Nevada

### Registration now open!

The full [conference program brochure](#) is now available for the 15th Symposium on Child Custody. Join AFCC as we venture to Las Vegas for the first time in decades.

Earn up to 18.5 hours of continuing education credits by attending the entire symposium, which features four pre-symposium institutes, two general sessions, and 36 outstanding workshops.

### Symposium topics include:

- AFCC *Guidelines for Parenting Plan Evaluations*
- The Dangers of Concept Creep in Family Law
- Psychological Testing
- Sorting Trauma from Stress in Family Court
- When Your Child Doesn't Want to Go
- Ethics of ODR
- Child Mental Health
- Mediation for Unrepresented Parents
- Research on Parent-Child Estrangement
- Factitious Disorder Imposed on Another
- Children with Special Needs and Resist-Refuse
- Unsticking the Stuck Client

## Book Your Hotel Room

Reserve your room now for our conference rate of \$179/night (including the \$30 resort fee) for single/double occupancy. Our room block is over halfway sold out so ***make your reservation soon!***

## Exhibitor Prospectus

Exhibitors at AFCC conferences enjoy the opportunity to reach hundreds of professionals dedicated to the resolution of family conflict. Your business could hit the jackpot, too! **[Read the prospectus](#)** and contact **[Patrick Sommer](#)** to sign up now.

[Register Now](#)

Orlando, FL

## AFCC Illinois Annual Conference

October 10, 2022

Chicago, IL

## AFCC Ontario Annual Conference

October 13-14, 2022

Toronto, ON, Canada

## AFCC Texas Annual Conference

December 8-9, 2022

Austin, TX

## AFCC Arizona Annual Conference

January 20-22, 2023

Sedona, AZ

## AFCC California Annual Conference

February 10-12, 2023

## 60th Anniversary Conference

Call for Proposals



AFCC encourages multijurisdictional proposals with co-panels.

## Conversation Corner

*Sherry Cassedy, author of Marriage Unveiled*

Sherry Cassedy, JD, MA, is a family law attorney, mediator, a marriage and relationships educator and advocate, and the author of the recently published *Marriage Unveiled: The Promise, Passion, and Pitfalls of Imperfectly Ever After* (River Grove Books). In her book, Sherry reflects on her own marriage, and offers insight and resources from her many years as a professional, working in the family law field. Sherry is a long-time member of AFCC and has been married to AFCC past-president, Dr. Matthew Sullivan, for 42 years. [Continue Reading...](#)



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## Webinar Corner

### Children's Voices in Cases Involving Parent-Child Contact Problem

*Mindy Mitnick, EdM, MA*

**Tuesday, August 9, 2022**

1:00pm – 2:00pm Eastern Time (US/Canada)

**Registration will close on August 8, 2022 at 9:00am Eastern Time US/Canada .**

When children resist or refuse contact with a parent, understanding their perspective is an essential aspect of providing services to the family including evaluation, mediation, parenting coordination, and therapy. This webinar will provide tips on communicating with children in these challenging cases.

**Mindy Mitnick, EdM** is a Licensed Psychologist practicing in Minneapolis. She received a Master of Education from Harvard University and a Master of Arts from the University of Minnesota. She specializes in complex custody cases, working as an evaluator, therapist, and parenting consultant. Mindy has trained professionals throughout the country about developmental issues in parenting schedules, effective interventions in high-conflict divorce, assessing allegations of sexual abuse during divorce disputes, and the use of expert witnesses in divorce cases. She served on the Minnesota Supreme Court Task Force on Parental Cooperation and the American Bar Association working group to update guidelines for child witnesses in criminal cases.



#### **Registration**

Members: \$15

Non-Members: \$50

#### **Certificate of Attendance**

Members: \$15

Non-members: \$20

[Register Now!](#)

## More Upcoming Webinars!

### The Power of Values in Family Law Disputes

*Bernie Mayer, PhD, April Harris-Britt, PhD*

September 14, 2022

## Representing Children in International Cases

Melissa Kucinski, JD, James Netto

October 18, 2022

## Understanding Adults that Sexually Abuse Children

Dr. Graham Hill

November 16, 2022

## Family Dispute Resolution Research

Marsha Kline Pruett, PhD, ABPP

December 13, 2022

## Access to Justice/Family Dispute Resolution Services

Jeannie Sato, JD, Loren P. Hildebrandt, JD

January 11, 2023

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## 60th Anniversary Conference

### Call for Proposals

AFCC is accepting proposals for 90-minute workshop sessions. Read the [Call for Proposals](#) thoroughly for complete instructions. Proposals must be submitted using [the online form](#) by the deadline on **October 5, 2022**.

### 60 Years of Asking the Difficult Questions

May 31-June 3, 2023

Westin Bonaventure

Los Angeles, California

#### Proposed topics may include but are not limited to:

- Access to Justice
- Cultural Issues in Family Law
- International Family Law Perspectives
- Direct and Cross-examination
- Family Court Reform
- LGBTQ+ Families
- New Ideas for Parent Education Programs
- Innovations in Family Court Services
- Parent-child Contact Problems
- Parenting Plan Evaluations
- Intimate Partner Violence
- What do Judges Need to Know?
- Parenting Coordination
- Family Law and Mental Health
- Research on Family Law
- Allegations of Child Sexual Abuse
- Family Dispute Resolution Innovations



[Submit Your Proposal](#)

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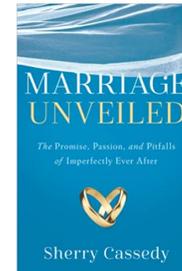
## Member News

**Hon. Michael Rust**, AFCC member from Oshkosh, WI has been named Circuit Court Commissioner of Winnebago County Circuit Court. Congratulations Michael and we look forward to seeing your presentation on the

*Ethics of Hybrid and Online Dispute Resolution with Self represented Litigants* at the upcoming 15th Symposium on Child Custody.



**Sherry Cassedy**, AFCC member from California and this issue's spotlight for the conversation corner has authored a new book, *Marriage Unveiled: The Promise, Passion, and Pitfalls of Imperfectly Ever After*. In her book, Sherry reflects on her own marriage, and offers insight and resources from her many years as a professional, working in the family law field.



**Sue Hansen**, AFCC member from Milwaukee, WI was presented The Lifetime Achievement Award by the Milwaukee Bar Association! This award recognizes Sue's excellence in the legal community as a family law practitioner and advocate for change focused on problem-solving and peaceful resolution of family issues. Sue is co-founder of the Family Mediation and has held leadership positions in many legal associations and community organizations. She is past president of the International Academy of Collaborative Professionals. Congratulations Sue!



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## Chapter News

Congratulations, to the new members of the AFCC Ohio Chapter Board of Directors!

**President:** Bobbie O'Keefe

**Pres-Elect:** Larry McQuain

**Secretary:** Wendi Stern

**Treasurer:** Chris DelFavero

**Past-President:** Judge Randall Fuller

### AFCC eNEWS

The *AFCC eNEWS* is the monthly e-newsletter of the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts. The *eNEWS* provides up-to-date information for professionals including practice tips, international news, and the latest initiatives in family law and conflict resolution. The *AFCC eNEWS* is provided at no charge to you; anyone can subscribe.

[Subscribe here.](#)

*AFCC members are free to share eNEWS content.*

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## **President's Message**

Hon. Linda Fidnick



Did you feel it at AFCC's Annual Conference in Chicago? Feel the energy? Feel the excitement? I most certainly did, and I suspect that it was due in large part to the collective joy of emerging together from the long dark tunnel of the pandemic. This conference was, as all AFCC conferences are, a chance to re-connect with colleagues and friends we hadn't seen for a while— although this time, for most in attendance, it was years instead of months. But the most exciting part of the event for me-- and I know that I also speak for the rest of the Board-- was seeing and meeting so many new faces. It was especially gratifying to see after some significant efforts during the pandemic, a younger and more diverse crowd, which reflects the ongoing growth and change that is the lifeblood of AFCC.

If you were lucky enough to have been in Chicago, I hope that you were able to enjoy presentations that inspire your imagination as well as help you in your work. If you also had a chance to share a coffee or a meal with someone who you met for the first time, I hope that the connection is one that you will enjoy for years to come. But above all, I hope that you returned home with renewed belief that we, as members of the international AFCC community, wherever we live, and whatever we do, can make the world a better place for the children and families we meet in our work.

As incoming president, I look back with not a small amount of awe at the terrific leadership evidenced by Mindy Mitnick, Larry Fong, and the Board of Directors and staff, as they carried us so successfully through COVID times. "Pivot" was the word of the hour... for over two years. Rather than capitulate to a global pandemic, they re-

doubled their creativity and ingenuity and led AFCC safely through it and into a new technological era.

While AFCC continues to thrive, much of the world feels less and less safe these days, regardless of where we live, and uncertainty feels like the new steady state. However, AFCC strives to promote deeply held values such as acceptance, security, diversity, and open-mindedness. We value each and every one of you for exactly who you are. Let us together celebrate this, and continue to ensure that our world, the entire AFCC community, and those whose lives we touch, is a place that is safe and welcoming to all.

I hope you will join us in Las Vegas from November 10-12, 2022, for our next gathering, AFCC's 15th Symposium on Child Custody. If you are not able to travel, AFCC now offers many virtual training programs and webinars on a regular basis as part of a more robust and accessible continuing education program. Be sure to mark your calendar now for the celebration at AFCC's 60th Anniversary Conference in Los Angeles next May 31-June 3, 2023.

Enjoy the remainder of your summer.

Hon. Linda Fidnick



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**Conversation Corner: Sherry Cassedy, JD, MA**  
*A Column Throwback to the eNEWS of the 90's*



*Sherry Cassedy, JD, MA, is a family law attorney, mediator, a marriage and relationships educator and advocate, and the author of the recently published *Marriage Unveiled: The Promise, Passion, and Pitfalls of Imperfectly Ever After* (River Grove Books). In her book, Sherry reflects on her own marriage, and offers insight and resources from her many years as a professional, working in the family law field. Sherry is a long-time member of AFCC and has been married to AFCC past-president, Dr. Matthew Sullivan, for 42 years.*

**AFCC:** Congratulations on the recent publication of *Marriage Unveiled*! Authoring a book of any kind can be a huge undertaking, but yours also includes an intertwining of insights gained from your years of practice as a family law attorney, and reflection on your own relationship. What inspired you to begin this project?

**SC:** After 10 years of divorce work, I felt a cumulative sadness. Of course, I was helping people, but I was sad to see so many what I thought had been good marriages unravel and end. I could not help thinking that some of them could have been saved if they had support at critical points in their relationships. Although there are plenty of relationship self-help books – when a couple is struggling, it is hard to admit and access resources. Marriages often degenerate to the point when they are getting divorced, before people seek help rather than when the resources could make more of a difference. I realized that there is very little support for married couples along the way, and even less so for nontraditional relationships. We don't really talk about the common relationship challenges that then lead to the bigger problems as the couple struggles

and their relationship erodes. I authored this book to start an honest conversation about marriage and I hope it will be a resource and an inspiration.

**AFCC:** What do you mean by the title, Marriage Unveiled?

**SC:** When challenges arise during a marriage, people wonder if what they are going through is normal? The notion of happily ever after distorts expectations. There is a veil, a cultural mythology, which keeps marriage behind this façade of happily ever after. A veil of privacy descends upon the marriage and there is no more talk about relationships. People tend to measure the success or failure of their relationship against unrealistic notions about the way things are supposed to be. If struggles are admitted along the way, others assume bad, rather than normal. The unspoken truth is that all good, healthy marriages struggle from time to time.

This book is both a memoir of my own marriage and an effort to pull back the veil to demystify to normalize struggles in marriage. It is also meant to be a source of support, not just premarital support or support when couples are ready to split – but for the whole span of marriage. There is general wisdom that can be drawn from the reflection questions that are woven throughout.

**AFCC:** The book includes many references to your personal marriage journey. What did you consider in making the decision to share your own story in such an honest and vulnerable way?

**SC:** Matt Sullivan and I have been married for 42 years. We, like other couples, have had our share of challenges. We talked a lot, before I began to put pen to paper, and throughout the project. It was essential for me to have Matt's input and support to fill out the story and deepen my own understanding. Of course, our story, and the general insights I share throughout the book are based upon my own experiences and I do not presume to speak for anyone else. But sharing our personal story, with all its strengths and vulnerabilities, joys and sorrows, is a critical component of validating those insights and inviting others to reflect honestly on their own stories, challenges, and wisdom.

**AFCC:** How have aspects of your professional background and expertise contributed to your work on this project?

**SC:** I have gained so much insight from working with people whose marriages were ending, and I have reflected on what may have gone wrong, and what might have been done to address struggles before it was too late. Later in my career, I received a Master's degree in Transpersonal Psychology, and I shifted my practice to conflict resolution. As a mediator and a marriage educator, I have worked to help couples resolve conflict and build healthy marriages. These experiences have taught me that mythology and silence keep healthy couples from resources needed to steer through those normal struggles, and also keep unhealthy, destructive marriages behind the veil.

In 2005, I also became licensed to officiate at marriage ceremonies. I take the time to talk with the couple to explore their expectations; to prepare them to navigate inevitable

struggles together; to create a ceremony that reflects their commitment; and to provide some tools and resources for the journey.

**AFCC:** What do you see as the most important takeaway for readers?

**SC:** Marriage is a process, a journey, an adventure! Sometimes the focus on the wedding, the dress, the flowers, the cake, keeps the couple from contemplating the heart of the ceremony and the commitments they are making to each other. We know that even the healthiest marriages will face challenges. Let's be honest. We have so much wisdom to share with each other in conversation and storytelling about our own real-life experience, the good and the bad. Then together we can embrace a much more realistic expectation of our own uniquely imperfect ever after.