

St. Mary's County Human Relations Commission
March 2, 2005

Minutes

Attendance: Mac McClintock, Bernadette Lewis, Kathleen Lyon, Betty Quinn and Debbie Greco

Excused: Tyrone Harris

Staff: Cynthia Brown, Division of Community Services

The meeting was convened at 5:35 by the Chairperson, Mac McClintock.

Cynthia Brown gave a financial report of \$1,516.51.

The guest speaker, Mr. John Roberts, gave an update on the activities of the St. Mary's Community Mediation Center. He was joined by his wife and co-mediator, Karen Roberts and Ms. Sharon Dodgins, the Director of the center. Mr. Roberts began by acknowledging that Cynthia Brown and the members of the Human Relations Commission were instrumental in the establishment of the Mediation Center four years ago.

The purpose of the center is to assist parties who have a dispute who have not been able to settle it on their own and could benefit from a neutral third party. There are currently 20 volunteer mediators at the center. They work on cases referred from the District Court, State's Attorney's Office, the MD State Commission of Human Relations and the St. Mary's Human Relations Commission, as well as the community at large. A 40 hour mediator training is coming up in April on the weekends of April 8 – 10 and 22 – 24. Interested persons should contact the center at (301) 475-9118. Several current HRC members have been through mediation training and HRC member Betty Quinn has voluntarily offered her services to translate Spanish.

Services are provided at no charge. There are only 16 mediation centers of this type in the entire state. St. Mary's Mediation Center is hoping to get involved soon with the Department of Juvenile Services and the St. Mary's Teen Court. Teachers in the public schools have also made referrals to the center.

Parties reach a satisfactory mediation agreement in about 72% of all cases mediated, which is a very favorable statistic. In those few cases where an agreement is not met, the parties indicate that the experience has still been beneficial in that it allows them to better understand the other party. A real shift in understanding occurs.

Currently in District Court, everyone is shown a video about mediation and this often helps people decide to choose mediation as a viable option. Court is public but mediation is confidential and people can speak freely.

Employment discrimination is the most prevalent type of case referred, with ADA/disability related cases following second.

Human Relations Awareness Day Breakfast and Awards Presentation – this event was announced for the public. It is scheduled for Saturday, April 9 at 9:00am, with doors opening at 8:30. This year's theme is Preparing Today's Youth for Tomorrow's Success and the guest speaker is the Honorable Judge Marvin Kaminetz. Honorees are Laurice White, Elsie Lawrence, Ken Ritter and Gary Brown.

Adjournment - 6 p.m.