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CDRC provides leadership

Local group is highly effective

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At a time when New York State government is under fire for its budget woes and political dysfunction, one agency distinguishes itself as a national leader — the New York State Unified Court System (UCS). UCS funds and administers alternative dispute resolution services, chiefly mediation programs offered by non-profit organizations in every county. New York can boast having one of the nation's oldest and most



Jeff Lydon

effective systems for delivering mediation services statewide.

The Community Dispute Resolution Center (CDRC) works with the state to offer mediation in Chemung, Schuyler and Tompkins counties. May 4 is Alternative Dispute Resolution Day, an ideal time to reflect on what mediation means to our communities and what CDRC gives to the thousands it serves every year.

In a state leading the nation in mediation, CDRC leads the state. A recent internal study measured six primary performance indicators of similarly funded dispute resolution centers covering 15 upstate counties and almost two-million New Yorkers. In each of the six metrics — cases per capita, percent of cases mediated, mediations per capita, persons served per capita, average case duration, and resolution rate (the percentage of cases in which parties reach an agreement) — CDRC ranked first.

Mediation at CDRC offers people the opportunity to get beyond legal disputes and protracted conflict. This proven and powerful process spares everyone the serious costs - both financial and otherwise - of ongoing conflict. CDRC mediates cases for far less money than overburdened, publicly funded courts can typically adjudicate them, which saves tax dollars and helps control dockets.

Yet the real impact of mediation remains its capacity to strengthen relationships, which strengthens communities. Handled without skill, conflict compromises families, erodes communities and carries devastating financial, personal and societal costs. One local organization devotes itself wholly to responding to conflict constructively and peacefully: the CDRC.

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Mediation at CDRC empowers people in conflict and honors their choices, creating the conditions for disputing parties to achieve lasting resolution independently. This alternative to expensive and intrusive

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institutional intervention ensures that parties remain in charge of their decisions.

A convenient and confidential service available to everyone at no cost, mediation is tailored to suit families, the elderly and youth facing conflict. At CDRC, conflict becomes an opportunity to be heard clearly, to listen well, and to regain peace of mind.

We are proud of our role as a leader in the field and of our peerless record of excellence. Some nine in ten people who avail themselves of CDRC services avoid the financial and emotional costs of ongoing conflict by achieving resolution through mediation. Each time that happens, all of the people within the communities CDRC serves are spared the social costs and potential violence associated with conflict.

Again and again at CDRC, we prove that talk works.

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Jeff Lydon is the executive director of the Community Dispute Resolution Center serving Chemung, Schuyler and Tompkins counties. To learn more, visit www.cdrc.org.

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