



Northern Community Mediation

Where The Solution Is Up To You

With two pre-school children, Mary and Joe had lost their jobs six months previously. Mary had been a part-time bookkeeper, and Joe a construction worker/painter. The unemployment they received did not cover their basic expenses. Consequently, they had fallen behind three months in their rent. Their landlord Bob called Northern Community Mediation (NCM) because he was frustrated that Mary and Joe were behind in their rent and would not return his phone calls.

During the mediation process, Bob learned that Mary and Joe had not returned his phone calls because they were embarrassed. They simply were not able to keep up with their basic expenses. Even though their car was paid for, it was barely running. On top of everything else, their son had fallen off the jungle gym and broken his arm. With no medical insurance, this was just one more roadblock.

At the same time, Mary and Joe learned that Bob was experiencing some hard times as well. Since his occupancy rate was at only seventy-five percent, he could no longer afford to hire the work out, and because of health issues, he could not do so himself. Additionally, his wife, who had handled the books for him, had died unexpectedly nine months previously. Bob also shared that he did not want to lose Mary and Joe as tenants because they had always been "good renters."

With the assistance of the NCM mediators, the three parties devised a creative solution. Bob hired Joe on a part-time basis to do repair and maintenance work at his three rental facilities. Bob also hired Mary on a part-time basis to keep his books. The wages that Mary and Joe earned were to go towards paying the past due rent plus the monthly rent as they continued to live in their apartment. They also agreed to evaluate the situation that after 17 weeks, at which time all rental payments would be up to date.

This arrangement worked out so well that even though Joe had found a full-time job, all three parties agreed that he would also continue to do repair and maintenance work for Bob, and Mary would continue doing the books. Additionally, Bob asked Mary to be responsible for cleaning the apartments between tenants.

What began as a conflict turned into not only a working relationship, but also a friendship. In all probability, if this case had gone to court, there would not have been a solution that was a win-win situation for everyone. Mediation provides the opportunity for people to resolve their differences without anyone being treated unfairly and having the feeling of being the loser.

In order to provide quality mediation services to the citizens of Charlevoix and Emmet Counties, however, NCM must rely upon raising approximately one-third of its funding. Consequently, donations that are made to the Center are essential. Therefore, we are enlisting your financial support by asking for a monetary contribution.

Thank you for your consideration on this matter, and thank you for making a difference. An envelope is enclosed for your convenience.

Sincerely,

Dr. Jane Millar, Executive Director