



Northern Community Mediation

Where The Solution Is Up To You

Serving Charlevoix
and Emmet Counties

September 17, 2012

NAME
ADDRESS
CITY

Dear NAME:

Not unlike many non-profit organizations, Northern Community Mediation (NCM) has experienced funding cuts for the past several years. Projections are that his pattern will continue. Therefore, I am asking for your help by making a donation to NCM.

The obvious question is "Why should I give to NCM?" I could answer this question with a series of data. I would rather answer this question by sharing a true-life story with you. This story is just one example of the type of impact mediation can have upon the people who come to the mediation table.

Two middle-school boys broke into what they thought was a junk yard. They vandalized the "junky old cars" by breaking wind shields, ripping off side view mirrors, smashing headlights, and maliciously destroying whatever they could lay their hands on. They were caught, found guilty, and ordered to mediation so that restitution could be established with the victims of their offense.

The couple who owned the "junk yard" was requesting \$600 in damages. The parents of both of the boys belligerently told NCM's Intake Coordinator that there was no way that they would pay that sort of money for a "bunch of junk." When the parents and the boys arrived for mediation, the attitude of the parents had not changed. They sat at the mediation table with their arms crossed, stern looks on their faces, and eyes that shot daggers at the couple who had been violated. The boys had the same demeanor as their parents.

During mediation, the older couple explained that they had two sources of income: social security and the money they made from the sale of automotive parts off the cars. They were dependent upon the sale of those parts to make ends meet. They explained further that the restitution they were seeking was based upon the value of the parts that the boys had destroyed.

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As the tale of the older couple unfolded, so did the arms of the parents of the two boys. The expression on their faces transformed into that of understanding. The boys began to realize that what they had destroyed was not junk at all but related directly to the livelihood of the couple.

What still remained, however, was the establishment of restitution. The older couple wanted this to be a learning experience for the boys. Therefore, they proposed the following:

- *The boys would be responsible for paying the couple \$300 in damages.*
- *The boys would work in the "junk yard" for the older couple on weekends and after school to pay back the additional \$300.*

The final question to be answered is "What was the ultimate outcome of this mediation?" The boys paid back the \$300 in cash and worked off the additional \$300. Of equal value is the fact that the boys continue to have contact with the older couple by letting them know how they are doing in school and life in general, and will often stop by merely to help.

It is highly unlikely that this would have happened in a court of law. It is the mediation process that creates a scenario where everyone is a winner by building a stronger community.

Please, consider making a donation to Northern Community Mediation so that we can continue to provide this type of service to the people in our community.

Sincerely,

Jane Millar, Ed.D.
Executive Director