



NEWSLETTER

Association of Family and Conciliation Courts

An international association of judges, counselors, court evaluators, mediators and lawyers

Volume 16, Number 4
Fall 1997

Custody Evaluation Symposium and Parent Education Congress Draw 600 to Breckenridge

Breckenridge, Colorado was the place to be this fall as 600 participants joined AFCC for the Third International Symposium on Child Custody Evaluations, September 11-13, and the Third International Congress on Parent Education Programs, September 14-16.

AFCC President-Elect Christine Coates and Local Chairpersons Sue Waters and Bob LaCrosse worked throughout the summer to ensure a large Colorado turnout. Delegates from England, New Zealand, Australia, Ireland, Canada and the United States joined the hosts from Colorado for outstanding conference sessions, ample networking opportunities and AFCC's famous hospitality at 10,000 feet above sea level. Hiking, mountain biking, swimming, golfing, shopping, gallery browsing and hot tubbing were among the many ancillary activities that left many participants breathless.

AFCC's Third International Symposium on Child Custody Evaluations was highlighted by four pre-symposium institutes, twenty workshops and three plenary sessions. Plenary sessions addressed developmental issues for children experiencing separation and divorce. Custody evaluators Vivienne Roseby, Ph.D., Robin Deutsch, Ph.D., Phil Stahl, Ph.D., and Frances Bernfeld, M.Ed., discussed the

challenges they face with children of various ages and developmental stages. Hon. James Beasley and attorney/mediator Christine Coates provided commentary from the perspective of the legal profession.

The Third International Congress on Parent Education Programs offered participants an opportunity to examine traditional divorce education programs as well as programs for specific target audiences. Programs for high conflict families, never married parents, children, addicted parents and domestic abuse families were featured. Plenary sessions included *Families of the '90s: New Roles, New Challenges, New Conflicts*, and *When They Just Won't Quit: Programs for High Conflict Families*.

AFCC also announced that Charleston, South Carolina will be the site of the Fourth International Symposium on Child Custody Evaluations and Congress on Parent Education Programs in the fall of 2000.

Special Thanks

AFCC thanks Bob and Donna Hinds, longtime Colorado members, for graciously opening their Breckenridge home to host a reception for the AFCC Board of Directors. AFCC would like to thank the following individuals and organizations for their support of the Third International Symposium on

Child Custody Evaluations and Third International Congress on Parent Education Programs:

Christie Coates, AFCC President-Elect and Colorado Conference Chair
Bob LaCrosse, Local Chair, Symposium on Child Custody Evaluations
Sue Waters, Local Chair, Congress on Parent Education Programs
Phil Stahl, Chair, Custody Evaluation Committee
Sam Ferrara, Co-chair, Parent Education Committee
Carol Roeder-Esser, Co-chair, Parent Education Committee
Sam Conti
Debbie Kulak
Leanna Hale
Linda Quigley
Toni Erickson
Kay White
Scottie Zeckman
Suzanne Zeide
Fran Fontana, Quade,
Fontana & Bonin, P.C.
Boulder Interdisciplinary Committee on Divorce
Colorado Association of Co-Parenting Educators
Colorado Council of Mediators and Mediation Organizations

afcc@afccnet.org

AFCC Prepares for Cyberspace Move

A FCC is moving to a new cyberspace address. As of December 31, 1997, our e-mail address will be <afcc@afccnet.org>. Plans are also underway for an AFCC website. If you have ideas about what you would like to see on AFCC's website or suggestions about potential links to other sites, please let us know by e-mailing to <afcc@afccnet.org>



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AFCC NEWSLETTER

Vol. 16, No. 4

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The AFCC Newsletter is a publication of the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts. The Newsletter is published four times a year. Deadlines for news items and advertising are March 1, June 1, September 1, and December 1. Advertising copy must be camera ready and payment made in U.S. funds.

Advertising Rates:

Full page (7½" x 10")\$400
Half page (7½" x 4½")\$300
Quarter page (3½" x 4½")\$175

AFCC Members Serve on Interstate Child Support Advisory Boards

AFCC is pleased to announce that Hon. Frances Rothschild and Mr. Joel Bankes have accepted invitations to represent AFCC on two advisory boards that will address interstate child support issues. Judge Rothschild, of the Los Angeles Superior Court, is Co-chair of AFCC's Child Support Committee. Mr. Bankes, former AFCC Treasurer, is Executive Director of the National Child Support Enforcement Association in Washington, D.C.

Judge Rothschild will serve on an advisory board that will guide the development of a judicial benchbook. Mr. Bankes will advise on the development of a CD-ROM for judges and other decision-makers on the Uniform Interstate Family Support Act (UIFSA).

The funding for the development of the benchbook and the CD-ROM comes from a generous grant awarded to Service Design Associates by the State Justice Institute (SJI). Through an interagency agreement, the Office of Justice Programs (OJP) and the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement are also providing funding for this initiative. Service Design

Associates is a consulting firm that specializes, in part, in legislative drafting and analysis and legal and judicial training. Margaret Campbell Haynes will coordinate the CD-ROM project and Ruth Bell Clark will be responsible for coordinating the development of the benchbook.

The development of the benchbook and CD-ROM is a critical project since the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 mandates adoption of UIFSA in its official form by all States by January 1, 1998. To achieve the legislation's underlying goal of uniformity within the interstate arena, the benchbook and CD-ROM are designed to provide clear and concrete guidance for judges.

The benchbook is scheduled for completion this spring and the CD-ROM is scheduled for completion in January 1998. These products will be distributed to each state judicial educator and administrative office of the court. Additional copies will also be available.

For more information, please contact Margaret Campbell Haynes at (202) 362-9811 or Ruth Bell Clark at (617) 338-3098.

Florida Adopts Qualifications for Dependency Mediators

by Gregory Firestone, Ph.D.,
Coordinator, University of South Florida
Mediation Institute, Tampa, Florida

Florida has become the first state to adopt qualifications for mediators who mediate dependency matters (abuse and neglect, foster care, or termination of parental rights). On July 11, 1997, the Florida Supreme Court adopted Rule 10.010 (d) which delineates the general qualifications to be certified as a dependency mediator. The five criteria are listed below.

Dependency Mediators. For certification a mediator of dependency matters, as defined in Florida Rule of Juvenile Procedure 8.290 (a) must:

- (1) complete a supreme court certified dependency mediation training program as follows:
 - (A) 40 hours if the applicant is not a certified family mediator or is a certified family mediator who has not mediated at least four dependency cases or;
 - (B) 20 hours if the applicant is a certified family mediator who has mediated at least four dependency cases; and
- (2) have a master's degree or doctorate in social work, mental health, behavioral sciences or social sciences; or be a physician licensed to practice adult or child psychiatry or pediatrics; or be an attorney licensed to practice in any United States jurisdiction; and

- (3) have four years of experience in family and/or dependency issues or be a licensed mental health professional with at least four years of practical experience or be a supreme court certified family or circuit mediator with a minimum of 20 mediations; and
- (4) observe four dependency mediations conducted by a certified dependency mediator and conduct two dependency mediations under the supervision and observation of a certified dependency mediator; and
- (5) be of good moral character.

The Florida Supreme Court Mediation/Arbitration Training Committee has developed training standards which were sent out for public comment in November 1997. When these training standards are adopted by the Florida Supreme Court, dependency mediation certification training programs will be offered for those interested in becoming a certified dependency mediator. Temporary certification is currently being granted to Florida certified family mediators who have mediated four dependency cases prior to July 1, 1997. Permanent certification as a dependency mediator will require successful completion of the appropriate dependency mediation certification course along with satisfaction of the other requirements for certification.

For further information contact the Florida Dispute Resolution Center, Supreme Court Building, Tallahassee, FL 32399-1905, Phone: (904) 921-2910.

Planning Underway for 35th Annual Conference in Washington, D.C.

Allied Organizations Collaborate With AFCC

AFCC's 35th Annual Conference, *Examining the Partnership Between Policy and Practice*, got off to a fast start with a local planning committee meeting October 31 in Washington, D.C. The conference will be held May 27-30, 1998 at the Capital Hilton in Washington, D.C. More than twenty participants came from Washington, D.C., Virginia, Maryland, West Virginia and Pennsylvania to attend the local planning meeting. Participants shared ideas on conference topics, speakers, local hospitality, entertainment, tours, etc.

Organizations represented at the planning meeting included:

American Psychological Association
District of Columbia

Multi-Door Courthouse
Montgomery County (Maryland)
Divorce Roundtable

Office of Child Support Enforcement,
U.S. Department of Health and
Human Services

Northern Virginia Mediation Service.

Also collaborating with AFCC will be:

American Bar Association Center
on Children and the Law
American Bar Association Section
of Family Law

American Bar Association Commission
on Domestic Violence
National Child Support Enforcement
Association

National Fatherhood Initiative

Capitol Steps to Perform at AFCC Annual Banquet

AFCC is pleased to announce that musical political satirists, the *Capitol Steps*, will provide entertainment at the AFCC Annual Banquet. Members of the *Capitol Steps* are former Congressional staffers who began performing in 1981 as entertainment for a Christmas party in the office of former U.S. Senator Charles Percy. Since then they have recorded seventeen albums, appeared on national television and radio shows and toured throughout the United States. Their whimsical program states, "It is a pure coincidence that most of the Members of Congress for whom the *Capitol Steps* have worked have either been defeated or placed under investigation." Several AFCC members recently attended a preview performance and can attest that this will be a very special event for conference attendees. Be prepared to laugh until your sides hurt as this talented troupe pokes fun at political figures and current events.

The AFCC Annual Banquet, including the *Capitol Steps* performance, is included in the registration fee.

The Capital Hilton

AFCC Conference headquarters will be the Capital Hilton, in Washington, D.C. just two blocks from the White House and walking distance to many other historic sites, including the Smithsonian Institute, the Capitol, the Washington Monument and

more. Reserve your hotel room by April 27, 1998 to ensure the AFCC conference rate of \$140 per night, single or double room. Contact the Capital Hilton at (202) 393-1000 or (800) 445-8667.

Come to Washington Early for the Holiday Weekend

Memorial Day will be observed on Monday, May 25, 1998, two days prior to the opening of AFCC's Annual Conference. AFCC's conference rate of \$140, single or double room, will be available from May 22-June 2, 1998. If you have never been to Washington, D.C., or if it has been awhile since you have seen the magnificent sites of the United States Capital City, make your plans now to take advantage of the long weekend and spring weather.

Mark Your Calendar for These Important Conference Dates

January 31, 1998:

Early Bird Registration Rate Expires.

April 27, 1997: Hotel Room Block and
Conference Rate Expire

May 11, 1998: Pre-conference
Registration Rate Expires

WORLD CONGRESS PAPERS AVAILABLE

AFCC is pleased to announce the availability of a compendium of selected papers presented at the **Second World Congress on Family Law and the Rights of Children and Youth**, June 2-7, 1997 in San Francisco, CA. This 350-page book includes papers from over forty World Congress presentations.

☐ Please send me _____ copies of the *World Congress Proceedings* at \$40 (U.S.) plus shipping and handling. Shipping and handling outside the U.S. will be billed separately.

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Remit to: AFCC, 329 W. Wilson Street, Madison, WI 53703, Phone (608) 251-4001, Fax (608) 251-2231.

AFCC Professional Development and Technical Assistance Task Force Meets

AFCC's Professional Development and Technical Assistance (PD&TA) Task Force convened in Washington, D.C. the weekend of November 1-2, 1997 to review the work of AFCC's PD&TA Division and to make recommendations for future PD&TA activity.

Task Force members included Mr. Robert Tompkins, Chair; Ms. Christine Coates, AFCC President-Elect; Dr. Phil Bushard, AFCC Vice President; Dr. Larry Lehner, AFCC Treasurer; Dr. Linda Girdner, ABA Center on Children and the Law; Hon. Emile Kruzick, Orangeville, Ontario and Mr. Tom Fee, Freehold New Jersey.

AFCC's PD&TA Division was established to provide assistance to courts and related agencies in need of training and consultation and to fill existing gaps in professional development programming. The Hewlett Foundation has supported the development of AFCC's PD&TA activity since 1994.

AFCC's Professional Development and Technical Assistance Task Force was initially convened in 1994 to establish a strategic plan and set forth guidelines for AFCC's PD&TA Division. The Task Force recommended the following:

1. Initiate a distinct AFCC entity to sponsor professional development and technical assistance activities.
2. Develop special topic offerings which meet identified needs of the family court and related programs.

3. Institutionalize regular and periodic strategic planning efforts to develop future topic areas.

4. Use each special topic offering to promote AFCC activities and products.

5. Focus on the unique interdisciplinary nature of AFCC.

Since January 1994, AFCC's PD&TA Division has sponsored 38 programs on the following topics:

- Parent Education
- Educational Programs for Children of Divorce
- Custody Evaluations
- Advanced Applications in Custody Evaluations
- Special Masters
- Mediation in Child Protection Cases
- Court Services Administration
- Ethical Issues
- Mediation
- Intermediate Mediation
- Advanced Mediation
- Mediation and Domestic Violence
- Impact of Divorce
- Mandatory Mediation

The programs have been conducted in several formats including: (1) six Special Topic Conferences; (2) six Special Institutes prior to AFCC Annual and Regional Conferences; (3) three training programs in

collaboration with the University of Wisconsin; (4) two training programs conducted by AFCC members; and (5) twenty-one training programs conducted by AFCC staff members Ann Milne and Peter Salem.

More than 3,300 individuals have attended AFCC's PD&TA programs since 1994. Several new AFCC publications have been developed including the *Resource Guide for Custody Evaluators* and the *Directory of Parent Education Programs*. AFCC membership has also grown as a result of PD&TA programs. The Symposia on Child Custody Evaluations and Congress on Parent Education Programs alone have resulted in nearly 300 new AFCC members.

While AFCC has maintained its leadership position in the field of mediation, the association is also recognized as a leader in the fields of child custody evaluations and parent education.

AFCC is continuing the development of its PD&TA Division by (1) assessing PD&TA performance from 1994-96; (2) making appropriate revisions and expanding PD&TA offerings; (3) exploring the development of an informational clearinghouse; (4) developing additional publications and products related to PD&TA programming.

For further information about the availability of AFCC training and technical assistance, contact Peter Salem, AFCC Associate Director, 329 W. Wilson Street, Madison, WI 53703. Phone: (608) 251-4001, Fax: (608) 251-2231, e-mail: psalem@afccnet.org

Notes from the Editor of the *Family and Conciliation Courts Review*

by Andrew Schepard, J.D., Editor,
Family and Conciliation Courts Review,
Hempstead, NY

I am delighted and honored to have been named Editor of the *Family and Conciliation Courts Review*. I want to thank you for the many expressions of good will I have received from AFCC's wonderfully supportive members. I look forward to working with you.

Former editor Hugh McIsaac is a hard act to follow. He is a continuing link to AFCC's traditions of humanity, innovation and collegiality. He has done a wonderful service to family court reform by nurturing the *Review's* growth. We all owe him a debt of gratitude.

You will be noticing changes in the *Review* in coming issues which I hope will increase the usefulness of the journal. A preview of some: together with Sage Publications, we have redesigned the cover and typeface. Hofstra University law students are working hard as student administrative editors. The Editorial Board is being reorganized. We are planning a number of special issues, including one on the Second

World Congress on Family Law and the Rights of Children and Youth.

No matter how the *Review* evolves, its core purpose will remain the same—to publish useful and informative articles that further AFCC's mission of improving the lives of the families who come to our family courts. All AFCC members—or anyone else who has something valuable to say to AFCC members—are encouraged to submit articles for consideration.

Publishing the journal is a team effort between editor and authors. Please help the *Review* continue to be the lively forum for ideas that AFCC members want and deserve. If you have an idea for an article and want to discuss how it can be developed further for publication, please contact me, especially by e-mail. Conference presentations can, for example, be developed into potentially publishable articles with only a bit more work.

A few rules (I am a lawyer, after all) about submitting manuscripts: they should preferably not exceed twenty double-spaced pages, including notes, references, tables, and figures. Please follow either the *Publishing Manual of the American Psycholog-*

ical Association (4th edition) or *The Bluebook: A Uniform System of Citation* (16th edition) distributed by the Harvard Law Review Association. Please submit two copies of your proposed article, an abstract of approximately 100 words and a biographical statement. A copy of the final manuscript on an IBM compatible disk will be required if the article is accepted for publication.

After you submit your article, we will send it to members of the Editorial Board for peer review. We will try to expedite the peer review process and keep you informed of the status of your manuscript as it goes through it.

If you have any questions, comments or want to submit a manuscript, you can reach me at:

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SPOTLIGHT SERIES

Las Vegas Family Mediation Center

by LaDeana Gamble, M.S.W., Director,
Clark County Family Mediation Center,
Las Vegas, Nevada



LaDeana Gamble

Las Vegas each month. The impact of this rapidly growing population on governmental services is phenomenal. This is particularly true in the case of the family court.

Background

The Nevada State Legislature created the Clark County Family Court in 1991. Family Court operations began in 1993. By 1996, the Family Court's eight judges, two commissioners and five special hearing masters were handling more than 30,000 domestic case filings annually.

The Family Mediation Center (FMC) falls under the administrative direction of the Eighth Judicial District Court Administrator and the Family Division Administrator. FMC has provided services since 1974 and has remained an autonomous agency in order to preserve its independence and neutrality. FMC staff includes ten family specialists and four support staff. In addition, two part-time mediators are funded by Nevada's Child Support Enforcement Program, State Welfare Division. Prior to October 1, 1997, non-confidential mediation and custody evaluation services were provided to parents contesting custody of their children.

Growth and Change

Since the 1993 inception of the Family Court, FMC's caseload has grown dramatically, along with the population of Clark County. In 1996, FMC provided services to more than 1,500 families. This ever-increasing demand for services has required FMC, with existing resources, to meet the needs of many more families. Legislative mandates and corresponding structural changes within FMC have recently been implemented in order to ensure access to a continuum of services including divorce education, confidential mediation and child custody evaluations.

Divorce Education

One of Clark County's most successful programs is the mandated divorce

education program, *Children Cope With Divorce*, established in 1992 by local court rule. All parties appearing before the Court on matters involving children must attend the class within 45 days of filing a motion.

Children Cope with Divorce is offered by three private non-profit agencies. The program is offered six times each week and once per month in Spanish. More than 13,000 parents have attended the program since its inception.

Children Cope with Divorce has enjoyed widespread acceptance and community support. This is due, in large part, to the program content which includes a focus on conflict resolution. This focus dovetails with the Family Court's desire to offer parents the opportunity to resolve their conflict in a non-adversarial forum. The *Children Cope with Divorce* program has enhanced the Family Court's efforts to educate parents about the importance of a heightened sensitivity to children's needs during separation and divorce.

The Court and FMC work closely with providers to ensure high quality programming. Providers must provide monthly program evaluations. These reports have consistently revealed high levels of participant satisfaction.

In addition, providers participate in quarterly in-service training programs. In-service programs are designed to update program providers on the latest research, to enhance their subject knowledge and to energize and revitalize presenters. In-service programs also provide an opportunity for providers to network with one another. Ideas for program improvements and better presentation methods are frequently shared.

Mediation

Clark County judges have long embraced mediation. Efforts to further develop mediation services were reinforced and accelerated by the 1997 legislature in Senate Bill 419, now known as Nevada Revised Statute 3.475. This bill directed the Court, by local court rule, to provide mandatory mediation in cases involving a dispute over child custody or access. Cases involving domestic violence, child abuse, or when one parent resides outside of the Court's jurisdiction, are excluded. The legislature also directed the Court to establish minimum educational and training requirements and minimum continuing education requirements for mediators.

Parties can access FMC mediation services by stipulation, a request for mediation or a court order. FMC now employs a confidential mediation model and a thirty-minute orientation, a component of the divorce education seminar.

Parties receive at least two three-hour mediation sessions. If necessary, parties may attend additional sessions. It is FMC's goal to complete mediation services within 45 days of the receipt of an order. FMC's mediation model was implemented on October 1, 1997. It is a working model and will be revised as specific concerns are identified.

Custody Evaluations

The growing caseload combined with limited resources have required FMC to outsource custody evaluation services to the private sector. Evaluation services in Clark County are now performed by licensed marriage and family therapists, social workers and psychologists.

FMC has sponsored training for the custody evaluators in private practice, developed a training manual and a roster of evaluators who offer their services to the Court.

For further information, contact LaDeana Gamble, Director, Family Mediation Center, 601 N. Pecos Rd., Las Vegas, NV 89101-2408.

Membership Directory to Be Updated Soon

Have you moved? Do you have a new post office box or e-mail address? Have you been given a new area code? Have you changed your name, place of business, profession or title of your organization? If you answered yes to any of the above questions, AFCC needs to hear from you before we publish our next Membership Directory.

Directory update information will be enclosed with the dues mailing to be sent out in December. Please return your renewal dues and Directory update by February 1, 1998 to be included in the 1998 Membership Directory. Thank you for helping us keep our Membership Directory accurate.

Professor Mary O'Connell



Prof. Mary O'Connell

Professor Mary O'Connell has been a very active AFCC member in recent years. Since her introduction to AFCC in 1994 she has been actively involved in the AFCC Massachusetts Chapter, served as co-reporter for AFCC's

1996 Northeast Regional Conference and has given presentations at several AFCC conferences. This fall, while in Breckenridge, Colorado for AFCC's Symposium on Child Custody Evaluations and Congress on Parent Education Programs, Professor O'Connell presented two workshops, moderated a plenary session and facilitated two focus groups.

Raised in Northampton, Massachusetts, Professor O'Connell attended Brandeis University outside of Boston. After two years working in the library at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, she returned to law school at Boston's Northeastern University. After clerking for the Supreme Court of Maine, Professor O'Connell returned to Boston to work for the law firm of Foley, Hoag & Eliot. While her practice consisted primarily of work with public utilities and insurance companies, she maintained a *pro bono* practice in family law and employment law.

Professor O'Connell returned to Northeastern University School of Law in 1979, this time as a member of the faculty. She served as Director of the Legal Research and Writing Program from 1979-82 and currently teaches family law, children's law and contracts. In 1996 she was named Distinguished Professor of Law and Public Policy at the Northeastern University Urban Law and Public Policy Institute.

Professor O'Connell lives on Boston's South Shore with her husband, attorney Terry Troyer, and their children Margaret, 16, and Russell, 12.

AFCC: Why did you move from the courtroom to the classroom?

Mary O'Connell: I always thought teaching would be tremendous fun and it is. I also wanted better control over my time. It just works a lot better for me to be a professor with kids than being a litigator. When I represented Pepsicola I was always on a plane to New York. I still work an enormous number of hours but I can do some of it in my living room while the kids are in bed. And there is no such thing as an emergency class. But I'm glad I had the experience of working in a big law firm. Some of what we

did was really exciting and the firm was good to me.

AFCC: Is there anything you miss about being away from the practice of law?

MO: I miss my *pro bono* practice. While it was quite small, I felt I was doing a lot of good for people. But I found it very hard to teach, write, be a mom and have a *pro bono* practice. For a long time I wasn't very involved in the practice of law. I hope I didn't get rusty. I do observe in court regularly and am in touch with judges and practitioners. I sometimes feel frustrated, though, because there is so much need and I haven't been able to take on clients.

AFCC: What is different about students who want to practice family law?

MO: Northeastern is known as a public interest law school so we have fewer button-down corporate types here to begin with. But I think that people who want to go into family law have less fear of scary things like human emotion. They are prepared to deal with people whose issues are as much emotional and psychological as legal and financial. I try to prepare them for this by giving them some of the insights of mental health professionals. I want them to know what their clients may sound like and how much emotional content there is going to be.

AFCC: Do you see yourself as an academic or an advocate?

MO: To say both sounds really presumptuous, but it depends on where I am. My natural bent is to be an advocate and I love it. But as a teacher of students I want to open their minds to the big picture. I want them to think about where laws came from, what was going on in society when a law was passed and why it went into effect. So I am not an advocate in that role. I *am* an advocate in some of my writing. I usually take a position. Also, when I consult on cases — although I rarely take them—I get into the advocate mode.

AFCC: Is there anything about which you are passionate to the point where your passion overtakes reason?

MO: Please, I'm a lawyer! Reason, logic and words are my major tools, so when I feel passionately about something I want to jump up and argue about it. But if you want to get me going it is pretty much anything about kids. Society and the American legal system do a bad job supporting our future generations. I think that in small ways, activist lawyers could help to make that better.

AFCC: You seem to lean toward championing the underdog.

MO: Well, I was a 60's kid. I was an anti-war protester. I came from a working class family and I have watched the distribution of resources get more skewed as I live my life. I was a working class kid who got a scholarship to college. Now I am a professor. There are far fewer opportunities for that to happen today. The public schools are not in great shape and the kids that go through the weakest of them come out at an enormous disadvantage. That's just not good for the future.

AFCC: What part of your work do you find most interesting?

MO: I find too many things interesting. I love teaching after all these years and it's still a kick to get a new group of students excited and interested in a new set of issues. But I have really come to love the interdisciplinary work that I am starting to do, the work on parent education and domestic abuse and the work I do with the Children's Law Center in Lynn, Massachusetts. I love working with people in the community who are trying to help children. The law is very broad and some types of work offer no contact with people. My utilities work was like that. I had to balance it so that I felt like I was accomplishing something worthwhile. Working on little pieces of a mega-business utilities deal just doesn't make nearly as much of a difference as getting back a child for a mother.

Member News

R. John Harper and Stanley Jaskot, AFCC members from Hamilton, Ontario, have joined forces to form the law firm of Harper, Jaskot. Barristers Harper and Jaskot may be reached at 25 Main St., West, Suite 810, Hamilton, Ontario, L8P 1H1; Phone: (905) 522-3517; Fax: (905) 522-3555.

Marsha Wylie, President of the AFCC California Chapter has resigned as Director of Family Court Services in Ventura County, California to open a private mediation, psychotherapy and evaluation practice. Ms. Wylie can now be reached at 3585 Maple Street, Suite 254, Ventura, CA, Phone: (805) 650-3750.

AFCC members **Judith Wallerstein, Risa Garon and Cathie Gray** were featured on the PBS television program *National Desk* with news commentator Fred Barnes. The program, *Children of Divorce*, aired nationally in October 1997.

MEMBER PROFILE

Custody Evaluator Dr. Philip Stahl



Dr. Philip Stahl

Dr. Philip Stahl, AFCC member from Dublin, California, has been a key player in AFCC's rise to prominence in the field of child custody evaluations. As AFCC's Custody Evaluation Committee Chair since 1995, Phil

has helped develop conference programs, participated as a plenary, institute and workshop presenter, contributed to AFCC publications and helped the Custody Evaluation Committee plan and participate in AFCC's three Symposia on Child Custody Evaluations.

Phil grew up in Detroit, Michigan and attended college at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. There, he majored in psychology and married his high school sweetheart. After graduation Phil attended Eastern Michigan University in Ypsilanti and earned his M.S. in psychology. He then went to work at Oakland County Child & Adolescent Clinic in suburban Detroit, providing child therapy and leading pre-school and parenting groups.

In 1976, Phil's son Jason was born. Shortly thereafter, Phil took a part-time job as chief psychologist at Northwestern Guidance Clinic and also returned to the University of Michigan to work on his doctorate in Guidance & Counseling.

It was Phil's experience at the Guidance Clinic that helped guide his choice of dissertation topic. "So many of the kids we

were seeing were having problems with divorce," he recalled. "And right around that time, Michigan's legislature followed California's lead and passed legislation that made it easier for parents to get joint custody. So I decided to study the prevailing attitudes and beliefs about joint custody."

Phil learned that the judges, lawyers and mental health professionals he interviewed were strongly opposed to joint custody arrangements. On the other hand, he found that the families and children who were living with joint custody loved it. "It really opened my eyes to the fact that professionals who thought they knew what was best were not listening to families and to children in particular. I also began to understand that there was a lot to overcome if we were going to restructure families in ways that were different from the norm."

Phil left the Guidance Clinic in 1982 so that he could work on his dissertation and spend time at home with his daughter, Becca, who was born that year. After earning his doctorate, Phil was trained in divorce mediation and practiced as a mediator, psychologist and consultant. His work as a consultant in the foster care field led to his first book, *Children on Consignment*, published in 1990, the same year the Stahl family moved to California.

After getting his practice on firm footing in California, Phil became active with AFCC, an organization he had joined in the early 1980's. The 1991 Annual Conference in Pittsburgh proved particularly fortuitous for Phil. It was there he was elected to the Board of Directors. He also had a chance meeting with an editor from Sage Publications. That conversation started Phil on the

path toward writing his popular book *Conducting Child Custody Evaluations*, published by Sage in 1994.

Following his divorce in the early 1990's, Phil was given the opportunity to learn about joint custody from the perspective of a parent rather than a researcher. While Jason now attends Shimer College in Waukegan, Illinois, Becca continues to spend half of her time with her mother, the other half with her father. Phil reports that his experience concurs with his research. "Becca, her mother and I all believe in joint custody and it works well for all of us."

While AFCC has provided Phil with several professional opportunities, it also gave Phil the occasion to meet his present wife Ruth. "Ruth's cousin, a friend of our family, had been trying to fix us up for some time," Phil said. "But Ruth lived in Baltimore and I lived in California. When AFCC had its 1992 Regional Conference in Baltimore we had the chance to spend some time together." Phil and Ruth tried a bi-coastal relationship for a year and Ruth then moved to California. Phil's gain has been AFCC's as well, as Ruth has attended nearly as many conferences as her husband in the last four years.

As he works on his third book, Phil's practice is thriving. He continues to help drive AFCC's commitment to the field of custody evaluation through his work with the Custody Evaluation Committee, coordinating programs and presenting at conferences. "I like working with AFCC members," Phil said. "The warmth and friendliness at AFCC is unlike any other organization I've been around. And the relationships I've established with AFCC are lasting ones." Ruth would probably agree.

Dr. Russ Schoeneman Retires as Director of Maricopa County Family Court Services



Dr. Russ Schoeneman

Dr. Russ Schoeneman, AFCC member from Phoenix, Arizona, has retired after 15 years as director of the Conciliation Court of Maricopa County Family Court Services to enter private practice.

Dr. Schoeneman was AFCC President in 1990-91 and served on the AFCC Executive Committee as Treasurer and Vice President. He has been chair of AFCC's Nominations Committee since 1991, was Co-chair of the Conference Planning Committee from 1984-87 and a member of the *Family and Conciliation Courts Review* Editorial Board from 1989-93.

Dr. Schoeneman may now be reached at: Dover Shores, 2222 S. Dobson Rd., Building 8, Suite 801, Mesa, AZ 85202; Phone: (602) 838-3303; Fax: (602) 838-2659; E-mail: <r_schoeneman@juno.com>

AFCC Arizona Chapter Conference Features John Haynes

The AFCC Arizona Chapter is pleased to announce that Dr. John Haynes will present a pre-conference institute at its Annual Conference, February 13-15, 1998 at the Prescott Resort Conference Center in Prescott, AZ.

The conference, *Divorce: Understanding the Challenges, Creating Solutions* will provide participants with a wide selection of workshops and an extraordinary cast of presenters.

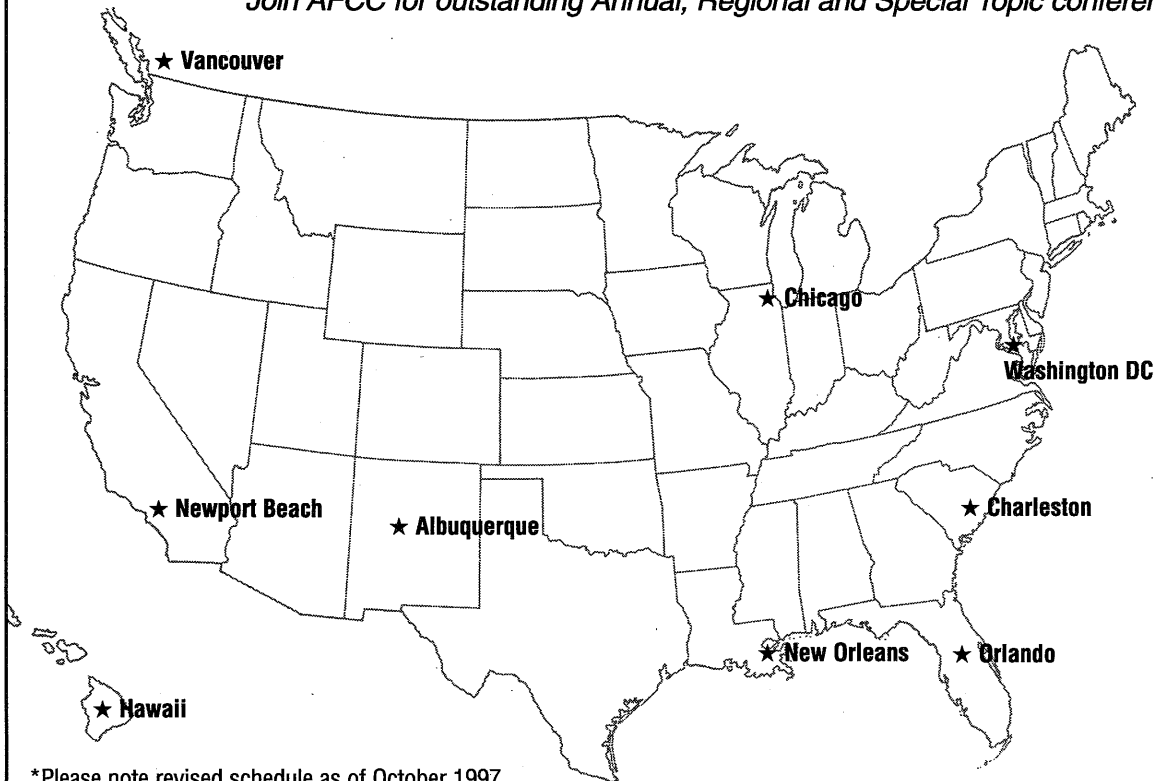
In addition to Dr. Haynes and the outstanding presenters from its home state, the AFCC Arizona Chapter is bringing in nationally recognized presenters to Prescott, including AFCC President-Elect, Christie Coates and Phil Stahl, Chair of the AFCC Custody Evaluation Committee.

The conference will be held over the President's Day weekend, giving participants an opportunity to enjoy the resort both during and after the conference.

For hotel information, contact the Prescott Resort Conference Center at (800) 967-4673. For further information on the conference, contact Marlene Joy, Ph.D., President, AFCC Arizona Chapter, (602) 566-4226, fax: (602) 948-8163.

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1997-98 AFCC Committee Chairs

A FCC committees provide an opportunity for members to become involved in the activities of the association. If you are interested in becoming active in AFCC or learning about a committee, please contact the committee chair listed below:

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Changes on AFCC Executive Committee

Joel Bankes has resigned as AFCC Treasurer due to increasing demands in his position as Executive Director of the National Child Support Enforcement Association. The AFCC Board of Directors has confirmed Dr. Larry Lehner as Treasurer. Hon. George Czutrin, AFCC Board Member from Hamilton, Ontario, has been selected to complete Dr. Lehner's term as Secretary.

International Meeting on Child Access Services Held in France

by Robert Straus, D.M.H., J.D., Director, The Meeting Place, Cambridge, Massachusetts

Child access services are developing rapidly throughout the world. In an effort to create opportunities for access programs in different countries to learn from one another, an international working group of experts on child access and supervised visitation services met last summer in Rouen, France. The International Child Access Working Group Meeting brought together nearly thirty program directors, researchers, jurists and government officials for two intensive days of discussion.

Funding and support for the meeting were provided from the Foundation de France. The meeting was organized by Benoit Bastard of the French Centre de Sociologie des Organisations, Laura Cardia-Voneche of the Institute of Social and Preventive Medicine at the University of Geneva and Rob Straus of the U.S./Canadian-based Supervised Visitation Network. Participants attended from ten countries, including Australia, Belgium, Canada, England, France, Germany, Israel, Italy, Switzerland and the United States.

The intent of the meeting was to develop connections between practitioners and researchers in different countries, to introduce each other to different practices and to identify differences and similarities in context and practices across cultures. The interdisciplinary nature of the meeting was particularly helpful. Practitioners presented information about child access programs in seven countries. Researchers addressed issues such as how to define and study service outcomes. Researchers also provided intellectual frameworks for the discussions while practitioners shared ideas and information which stemmed from direct experience, e.g., research questions that are of interest to service providers and to the judiciary, what data is presently available, what data would be helpful that does not exist, etc.

The presence of several government administrators expanded the discussions to issues of social policy. Of particular interest were issues related to the appropriate relationship and transfer of information between child access programs and the judiciary.

The meeting had two important immediate results. First, an informal international network was formed, tentatively named the International Network of Parent-Child Contact Centers. This network is composed of representatives from each of the ten participating countries, including a practitioner, a researcher and, if possible, a member of the judicial community. Initially the network will serve as a conduit for communication, with representatives collecting and sharing information about services in their respective countries. In the coming year, representatives from additional countries will be added and proposals for a statement of purpose and plan of organization will be developed.

Network Representatives from the United States are Janet Johnston, Associate Professor, San Jose State University, California; and Rob Straus, Director, The Meeting Place, Cambridge, Massachusetts; Canadian representatives are Rachel Dabraio, Manager, Supervised Access and Family Mediation Services, Toronto, Ontario; and Jane Grafton, Greater Vancouver Mediation & Supervised Visitation Services, Surrey, British Columbia. Representatives from Australia are Judy Harrison and Lucy Morgan, Esq. New Zealand's representative is Elizabeth Dyer-Grey, New Zealand Association of Children's Access Services.

The second important result was that the group agreed to pursue the organization of an international conference on child access services. The conference will take place in Paris, France November 5-6, 1998.

For further information, please contact one of the following individuals:

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January 26-28, 1998—Washington, D.C.

Mid-Year Policy Forum and Conference,
Washington, D.C.
Contact: National Child Support Enforcement
Association
(202) 624-8180

January 26-30, 1998—Boulder, CO

Divorce and Child Custody Mediation Training
Contact: CDR Associates
1-800-MEDIATE

January 27-31, 1998—Corte Madera, CA

Divorce Mediation
Contact: Northern California Mediation Center
(415) 927-1422

February 4-8, 1998—Eugene, OR

Basic Divorce Training
Contact: The Oregon Mediation Center
(541) 345-1456

February 13-15, 1998—Prescott, AZ

AFCC Arizona Chapter Conference
Contact: Marlene Joy
(602) 566-4226

February 23-27, 1998—Chicago, IL

Basic Mediation Training
Contact: Mediation Training & Consultation
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(800) 535-1155

March 5, 1998—Corte Madera, CA

Developing Effective Parenting Plans
Contact: Northern California Mediation Center
(415) 927-1422

March 5-7, 1998—Queensland, Australia

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Fax: 61 7 5595 2246

March 6-8 & 20-22, 1998—New York

Basic Divorce Mediation Training
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(800) 613-4867

April 1998—Ann Arbor, MI

Advance Mediation Training
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May 27-30, 1998—Washington, D.C.

AFCC 35th Annual Conference
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Philip Stahl, Ph.D., Author, *Conducting Child Custody Evaluations*

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