



FOUNDED IN 1963

AFCC NEWS

ASSOCIATION OF FAMILY AND CONCILIATION COURTS

Volume 27, Number 4

Fall 2008



AFCC Board Announces Price Freeze

The AFCC Board of Directors has voted to freeze all prices for members until at least January 2010. The unanimous decision was reached at the Board's September 25, 2008 meeting in Albuquerque, New Mexico, the same week the United States Congress struggled with the proposed bailout of Wall Street and its effect on the global economy.

"Everywhere we look, prices are increasing," said AFCC President Dr. Robin Deutsch. "Gas is up, groceries cost more, inflation is higher and so is the cost of doing business for AFCC. But we have experienced significant growth in the last few years, which has strengthened our financial health. The price freeze is AFCC's way of telling members that we appreciate their loyalty during these difficult times."

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AFCC Goes Back to the Future and Returns to New Orleans

Make your plans now for AFCC's 46th Annual Conference, May 27-30, 2009. *Children, Courts and Custody: Back to the Future or Full Steam Ahead?* will take place at the Sheraton New Orleans and will examine challenges to conventional child custody wisdom, including assertions about 50/50 parenting, the child's role in the process and the resiliency of children of divorce. *Registration will be available in*

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www.afccnet.org



ASSOCIATION OF FAMILY AND CONCILIATION COURTS

AFCC is an interdisciplinary and international association of professionals dedicated to the resolution of family conflict.

Mission

To improve the lives of children and families through the resolution of family conflict.

Vision

A justice system in which all professionals work collaboratively through education, support and access to services to achieve the best possible outcome for children and families.

Values

- Collaboration and respect among professions and disciplines
- Learning through inquiry, discussion and debate
- Innovation in addressing the needs of families and children in conflict
- Empowering families to resolve conflict and make decisions about their future

Views expressed in the AFCC News are those of individual contributors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of AFCC.

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AFCC News Advertising

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Half page	\$300	\$450
Quarter page	\$150	\$250

President's Message

AFCC is many things. It is a source of information, innovation and ideas. It is a mission-driven association that looks to improve our systems and services for children and families. And it is a place where many members find camaraderie and collegiality.

At the same time, AFCC is also a small business and must be operated accordingly so that we may provide our programs, products and services. In recent years, operating costs have increased significantly. Everything is increasing, from rent to staff salaries, to the cost of maintaining and improving our technology. Conference expenses continue to rise and coffee costs more than \$100 per gallon at some venues (and that is far less than one

week's quota for some of us as individuals). I cannot begin to describe what it takes for us to provide a decent health plan for our staff. But as an organization dedicated to family well-being, the AFCC Board has always felt it is necessary to walk the talk and provide its staff with a good health insurance plan.

With the cost of business increasing, with prices rising everywhere, and with our increasingly uncertain economy, AFCC must protect itself and its members with appropriate action. Therefore we are announcing a freeze on all member prices until 2010.

It seems a bit backwards, I know. How will AFCC keep up if we cannot raise prices to at least keep up with inflation? Especially when we have been adding more and more member benefits?

Simply put, we are betting on you. We think that AFCC members will stick with us through the tough economic times, just as we've kept costs down and expanded benefits in recent years for you. We've been able to do this because AFCC has grown. There are many new members and more of you are coming to conferences and training programs. This has improved our financial health. It's like the line from the old commercial: "How do we do it? Volume!"

This may not be the most effective small business strategy as we lose a bit of financial ground every year. But we have held the line over the years because we believe it is important to have more and more members dedicated to the AFCC mission and contributing to this association. We

believe that we can make a difference to the families we serve.

So we will freeze all of our prices for members until 2010—conferences, trainings, dues, publications, everything. It is our way of saying thank you for being supportive. And it is our way of encouraging you to stick with us.

These are difficult economic times and we want to send a strong message that we will support our members. And we hope you will support your association. We know that \$150 for dues is not a small amount of money for many members; for others it may not represent as much. (If you have the resources, please think about contributing to our scholarship fund so that those with financial need can more easily participate in AFCC conferences).

When your renewal notice comes this year or next, or when you decide where you will get your continuing education, please think for just a moment of the value of AFCC to you: The *Family Court Review*, listervs, conferences, the *AFCC eNEWS*, an AFCC Chapter or even listening to conference plenary sessions through the member section of the AFCC Web site. For me, it is especially the network of professionals with whom I consult, learn and collaborate.

I have been very fortunate to have found a professional home with AFCC. Last summer, along with my colleagues Matt Sullivan and Peggie Ward, I was able to participate in a remarkably innovative intervention for high conflict families (see related story on page 8). That isn't the reason I joined AFCC, but it would never have happened without it. Perhaps it isn't the quantifiable benefits but the intangibles that make this organization special. Whatever it is, stick with us, the best is yet to come.



Robin M. Deutsch
AFCC President
Boston, Massachusetts

These are difficult economic times and we want to send a strong message that we will support our members. And we hope that you will support your organization.

AFCC Price Freeze

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Dr. Deutsch noted that the freeze will extend to registration fees for conferences, training programs and pre-conference institutes as well as publication prices and membership dues. "We actually have not raised dues since 2001," she said, "but given the cost of doing business, we have been seriously considering a small increase. Discussions of any increase are now on hold until 2010." According to Dr. Deutsch, the freeze will not apply to non-member prices but the association will make every reasonable effort to hold the line there as well.

MEMBER PROFILE

AFCC Member, Ernest A. Sanchez, LCSW



**Ernest A. Sanchez,
LCSW**
San Fernando, California

Ernie Sanchez is an AFCC member from San Fernando, California. He serves as a Senior Family Mediator within Family Court Services at the Los Angeles County Superior Court. He joined the court in 1985 and has mediated over 8,500 child custody disputes. Ernie has presented at AFCC conferences since 1989 and has served as head shepherd at conferences. In September 2006, he appeared as a guest speaker on a one-hour PBS special entitled, "Kids and Divorce: For Better or Worse."

How did you become interested in the field of separation and divorce?

I was first introduced to AFCC in 1979 when I was a first year graduate student at the University of Southern California, School of Social Work. As if by destiny, I had been placed by the University at the Los Angeles Superior Court, Conciliation Court for field work experience. Child custody mediation was still in its infancy. The Bar Associations were still warming to the idea of dispute resolution and here I was, knowing nothing of the mediation process or of the courts, and feeling very intimidated by the responsibilities that the work required. I stepped up to the task and quickly learned that between 1970 and 1980, Meyer Elkin, Hugh McIsaac, Jeannie Ames, Stan Cohen, Justice Donald King and many other outstanding professionals had worked hard to establish mediation in the courts and around the world through legislation and AFCC. That first year placement resulted in my admiration for the work, the professionalism and integrity that was brought to the workplace. I was determined to return to the Conciliation Court and work to contribute to the field. I applied and was hired in 1985.

What is the best advice that you have been given?

Always remember to keep your identity in check and never forget that you are a professional with integrity in the direct services you provide. Who gave me this advice? My parents.

What advice would you give to someone entering the field?

Work hard at remaining neutral and impartial and respecting every person's right to privacy and self-determi-

nation. This is essential. Let go of your own view of right and wrong, of your own view of the world and approach everything you see and do from a place of inquiry. Basically, you teach me about your world.

What are the greatest challenges you foresee in the field of court-connected child custody mediation ten years from now?

The erosion of the mediation process. Mediation was designed to provide individuals with the opportunity to resolve their disputes on their own, with the assistance of a neutral, impartial facilitator. Today's focus is in finding "the truth." Evaluation has become the focus to assist the judiciary in ruling on matters of the family. Mediation was designed to create orders that cover the areas of concern for each party, not determining whether or not the concern was valid or true. Truth is for the courts to decide on a factual basis. Mediation was designed for dispute resolution to avoid litigation. The mediator, except in suspicions of child abuse, suicidal ideation or homicidal ideation, provides solution focused options for parental consideration in the processes of dispute resolution. Allegations abound in mediating disputes, but the task is to help parents and the family system redirect their energies from attacking each other to beginning anew, creating a new contract with orders that covers each parent's areas of concern and the needs and safety of their children.

What areas of your work do you enjoy most?

The families I meet every day. Knowing that I can create a difference toward the positive resolution of conflicts that will make a child's life better during a parental separation is a major league reward. I leave work a happy person knowing that I have helped a couple and their family avoid the turmoil and expense of litigation.

AFCC has been the innovator that provides conferences that do not shy away from controversy but instead present the pros and cons of any issue.

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How Best to Find Out what a Child Really Needs and Wants

Hon. Peter Boshier

Principal Family Court Judge of New Zealand

Custody cases in our Courts are very different than cases in other Courts. Lawyers are generally trained to represent clients and to advocate on their behalf within a system that is complex and often idiosyncratic. However, the lines are not so difficult to see in most Court cases. Whether criminal or civil, there are two parties in opposing stances. The points of view of each are put, evidence called, questioning occurs and the Judge delivers a verdict according to the arguments that appear to have the most merit.

Children's custody cases are not about the opposing sides but, of course, about children and their welfare. So how can children's positions best be put and a decision be made having regard to what children need and not simply what their parents want?

I pen these remarks unapologetically from a judicial perspective. Psychological medicine is a world into which I intentionally do not venture for the purpose of this article. Instead, I would like to discuss and provoke some thought about how custody cases should be handled and how we best go about achieving our objectives.

If there is one observation that I hope meets with universal approval it is that resolution of issues for children does not benefit from delay. Cases take on a life of their own and status quo situations are often difficult to dislodge, even if this is grossly unfair to the children or one of the parties.

It is inevitable that contested custody cases will be initiated by one of the parents filing an application for an order. For completely acceptable and understandable reasons, the orders that the court is asked to make in respect of the child's welfare are as perceived by the parent concerned. It is not unusual to have an affidavit accompanying an application, which purports to describe what the care arrangements should be—because the child concerned is said to have reported that to the initiating parent.

Equally unsurprising is the likely response of the other parent, who may be feeling disempowered, cut off, disrespected and often highly offended by supporting material filed by the initiating parent.

I think that unless early intervention occurs, the perceived needs of a child become the issues as framed by the parents and, as bitterness settles in, the children's needs and welfare interests become submerged in the parents' perceptions. My experience has been that, unless there is judicial intervention at an early stage, it becomes increasingly difficult to shift parental attitudes.

With all of this in mind, I favor early judicial intervention in cases in order to decide whether a case lends itself to conciliation or mediation, or whether the situation is so fraught with conflict and one of the parents disempowered, that firm judicial direction is needed at an early stage.

It is inconceivable to me that, at this stage in a case, the children's needs can be accurately accessed unless there is representation of the children and appropriate input of their views. How is the Judge to possibly calculate this otherwise? I suppose it could be argued that Judges are worldly-wise and always know what is in the best interests of children. It could also be said that parents are best placed to represent what their children want. But I am skeptical of both arguments. Children will so often tell their parents what their parents want to hear. Judges, also, may be excessively influenced by their own upbringing and views of parenting practice.

I accordingly favor immediate appointment of an Advocate for a child, whether that be an attorney or another suitably qualified person such as a social worker. It need not necessarily be a psychologist. I think it essential that such a person sees the child away from influence and is able to put fairly and firmly to the Court, without fear of criticism from the parents, what the child wants.

There is, of course, a category of custody cases where discerning what a child really wants, because of what the child represents, is much more difficult. I talk of cases where children have been alienated or coached. The courts must be constantly alive to the criticism of a parent that this may have occurred and that what the child is representing is not really the child's properly held view.

I favor early identification of cases where this may be an issue and a specialist report being obtained. For if there is truly alienation occurring, judicial intervention and orders may be unproductive and the case may become intractable. Therapy may be essential at this early stage.

In addition to representation of a child's needs and welfare from an Advocate and/or specialist report, there is the added option of the Judge electing to see the child personally. There is much debate on whether this is a good idea or a bad idea. In New Zealand, we have elected to obtain children's wishes directly and cautiously if the child wishes to convey those to the Judge. Protective and natural justice mechanisms must be put into place if this is to occur. But I do want to say that my experience of this process so far has been as the recipient of valuable information as to the child's needs. This has not necessarily been evident from Advocates or reports. It has provided an additional and enlightening dimension to judicial decision making.

The purpose of the model that I propose is to frame the issues correctly for the child at the outset, and not seek to do so much later on and especially just before trial. By then, the issues might be affected by quite different and unfair considerations. I have already mentioned status quo arguments.

I would readily accept that when a case comes on for trial, conventional judicial practice must prevail. And by

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New Innovations Books from AFCC

AFCC is pleased to announce two outstanding new publications available for purchase.

Innovations in Family Law Practice, edited by Kelly Browe Olson and Nancy Ver Steegh, chronicles the changing landscape of family law practice. The publication offers six chapters (171 pages) that examine the development of new legal processes, implementation of new professional roles, promotion of family self-determination and innovative responses to scarcity of resources.

Innovations in Interventions with High Conflict Families, edited by Linda B. Fieldstone and Christine A. Coates, presents six distinct approaches in working with high conflict families and provides the reader with opportunities for adoption, replication or creative expansion of the models featured. Thirteen experts collaborated on six chapters (225 pages) for this must-read for professionals who work with high conflict, alienation, domestic abuse and child custody disputes.

The appendices for both books are available for free in the Resources for Professionals page on the AFCC Web site at www.afccnet.org/resources/. Each book is priced at \$40 and AFCC members receive a 15% discount. The books can be purchased online at www.afccnet.org or by completing and mailing the order form on page 13 of this

newsletter. For more information, contact AFCC at (608) 664-3750 or publications@afccnet.org.

Special Thanks

AFCC would like to thank the following editors and authors for all of the time and energy they contributed to make the Innovations books a reality.

James C. Billings
Christine A. Coates
Robin M. Deutsch
Leslie Drozd
Linda B. Fieldstone
Rhonda Freeman
Donald A. Gordon
Susan A. Hansen
Gregory M. Hildebrand
Elena Hobbs-Minor
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Carmelo Runco
Andrea Kupfer Schneider
Matthew J. Sullivan
Elizabeth S. Thayer
Nancy Ver Steegh
Jeffrey Zimmerman

AFCC Returns to New Orleans

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early January. Please confirm your registration early, as space is limited.

Featured presenters will include: Jennifer McIntosh, Ph.D., Family Transitions, North Carlton Australia; Paul Amato, Ph.D., Pennsylvania State University; Hon. Peter Boshier, Principal Family Court Judge, Wellington, New Zealand; Mary E. O'Connell, J.D., Northeastern University School of Law; Mindy Mitnick, M.Ed., Licensed Psychologist, Minneapolis, Minnesota; Hon. James Williams, Halifax, Nova Scotia; and Dan Goldberg, LL.B., B.S.L., Office of the Children's Lawyer, Ontario Ministry of Attorney General.

The conference will kick off with full-day pre-conference institutes on Wednesday, May 27, 2009. Institutes will include: Differentiation and Domestic Violence; Child-inclusive Mediation; Judges Institute on Expert Witnesses; Advanced Mediation Techniques; Family Restructuring Therapy; and Parenting Coordination in the Courts.

AFCC's Resource Development Committee is offering scholarships to AFCC's 46th Annual Conference. Scholarships will be given to international participants, graduate students, professionals working in the conference host community and others. A limited number of travel stipends

will also be offered. AFCC members receive preference for all conference scholarships. Look for the scholarship application in the *AFCC eNEWS* and on the AFCC Web site at www.afccnet.org in January.

The Sheraton New Orleans is offering AFCC members a special group rate of \$165 per night, single or double accommodations. The Sheraton is conveniently located at the edge of the French Quarter and within walking distance of some of New Orleans' best restaurants and music. Stay tuned to the *AFCC eNEWS* for the latest information on the conference, including the conference program brochure and online hotel reservations. For more information, please contact AFCC at afcc@afccnet.org or (608) 664-3750.



AFCC Heats up Albuquerque with Eighth International Symposium and Congress

Nearly 400 custody evaluators, parent educators and other family law and dispute resolution professionals from 45 states and provinces joined AFCC in Albuquerque for the *Eighth International Symposium on Child Custody Evaluations* and *Eighth International Congress on Parent Education and Access Programs*.

Listen to Plenary Session Audio Online

The *Symposium* featured three plenary sessions moderated by Hon. R. John Harper. The audio recordings are available for free download at the Member Center of the AFCC Web site at www.afccnet.org/members/.

- *Deconstructing the Evaluation Process: What Exactly Are we Doing?* opened the Symposium with Linda Cavallero, Ph.D., Michael Gottlieb, Ph.D. and Hon. Nan Nash who examined the various components of the evaluation process.
- *The Pieces of the Evaluation Puzzle: Do They Always Fit?* examined some of the more controversial components of the evaluation process and featured Linda Cavallero, Ph.D., David Medoff, Ph.D. and Hon Deborah Davis Walker.
- *The Child Custody Consultant: Helpful Shepherd or a Wolf in Sheep's Clothing? Addressing Ethical and Practical Concerns* closed the conference with Renee Lehr, J.D., Ph.D., Dianna Gould-Saltman, J.D. and H.D. Kirkpatrick, Ph.D., who addressed the benefits and concerns that coaching the client brings to the evaluation table.

The *Congress* featured two plenary sessions that are also available for free download in the AFCC Member Center.

- *Domestic Violence and Differentiation: The Impact on Parent Education Programs* opened the conference and featured Nancy Ver Steegh, J.D., M.S.W., who discussed the work of the AFCC and NCJFCJ Domestic Violence and Family Courts Project and much more. Respondents included Cori Erickson, M.S. and Arnold Swartz, LCSW, and moderator Robert M. Smith, J.D.
- *Stripped Down or Fully Loaded: Can Courts Deliver Parenting Programs that Change the Impact of Divorce on Children?* closed the conference and was presented by Irwin Sandler, Ph.D. and Sarah Jones, Ph.D. The session examined the challenges of implementing effective parent education programs in a court setting.

AFCC would like to thank the Program Committees for helping to make both conferences a success. The *Symposium* Program Committee included Linda Cavallero, Robin Deutsch, Hon. Denise McColley, Arnie Shienvold and Phil Stahl. The *Congress* Program Committee included Cori

Erickson, Les Herold and Bob Smith. Special thanks to conference shepherds Diana Chavez, Meadow Clark, Stephanie Ewoodzie, Ilene Fletcher, Terry Ginsberg, Diann Sheppard, Valerie Quarles-Walker and Abbey Wells.

Reno Selected for 2009 Regional Training Conference

Save the dates for AFCC's Regional Training Conference, November 5-7, 2009 in Reno, Nevada. Back by popular demand, the conference will offer program tracks for judges, mediators, lawyers, custody evaluators and parenting coordinators.

The conference will take place at the Peppermill Resort located in downtown Reno and 25 miles from Lake Tahoe. AFCC has secured the special room rate of \$99 single or double in the Peppermill Tower and \$149 single or double in the new Tuscany Tower. More information on Reno and the Peppermill Resort can be found at www.visitrenotahoe.com and www.peppermillreno.com. Mark your calendar now!

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Breaking Barriers: An Innovative Program for Alienated and Estranged Children

by **Robin Deutsch, Ph.D.**, Boston, Massachusetts,
Matthew Sullivan, Ph.D., Palo Alto, California and
Peggie Ward, Ph.D., Natick, Massachusetts

After struggling for years with some of the most difficult and heartbreaking post-divorce family situations—where a child has rejected one of their parents—three AFCC members designed, funded and conducted an innovative and intensive clinical approach to work with families called Breaking Barriers Camp.

Five families participated in three and a half days of psycho-educational groups, strategic interventions and enjoyable family camp activities this summer at Common Ground Center in Starksboro, Vermont. The families came from Arizona, Florida, Massachusetts, Minnesota and Toronto. In four of the five families, one parent (either mother or father) had had no contact with a child for at least six months and some up to two years. The families (including both the parents and all the children) were instructed to live at the camp.

Most parents had been involved in litigation for years and only spoke with each other in the courthouse. After this intensive program these initial results were noted:

- Every child had multiple connections, including direct interactions with the estranged parent;
- The majority of participants rated their experience a five on a five point scale, with the rest rating it a four;
- Both parents in each family, many of whom had not spoken outside of the courtroom, met together successfully at least once; and
- Four of the five families left with a mutually agreed upon after-care plan to build on the parent-child connections and co-parenting progress that had been made.

Breaking Barriers Camp began with a brainstorming group in Massachusetts, and—true to the tradition of AFCC interdisciplinary innovation—included judges, attorneys and mental health professionals. AFCC President Robin Deutsch and Peggie Ward quickly recruited Matt Sullivan to join the clinical team. The group knew they would only have a successful program if:

- All members of a family system participated in the program;
- The program was off-site with overnight accommodations for each group;
- The program included intensive group work for parents and children;
- The program offered many recreational opportunities for children and parents to participate in; and

- The program offered a tremendous amount of support for every small step taken toward reunification between rejected parent and children.

The Common Ground Center complemented the clinical aspects of the program with a beautiful site, rustic cabins that slept up to six people for parents (divided by gender), cabins for children and a skilled, dedicated and charismatic staff who did projects and activities during the day, and slept in the cabins with each group at night.

Camp days began with yoga at 6:00am and continued with campfires and song until 9:00pm. Groups were assigned to each clinical team member by the following: Matt led the West Group (parents who had little to no relationship with their children); Peggie led the East Group (parents who played various roles in keeping the children aligned to them and away from the other parent) and Robin ran the Common Ground Group (for all the children and adolescents). Groups ran for three hours in the morning followed by afternoons with structured, strategically planned camp activities.

The clinical team took every opportunity available during the day to intervene with constellations of family members to create bridges for children and parents (or parents and parents) to connect with one another. The families, after their work in the morning groups, were remarkably open to all interventions and actively engaged with staff to support the goals of the camp. Communication and coordination was key and camp director Carole Blane was the communication link between camp staff and clinicians. Peggie, Robin and Matt met each morning to incorporate any needed changes to the group program and at lunch to plan the afternoon interventions. Dinner provided yet another opportunity for clinicians to regroup and plan evening interventions. The camp in July ran from Wednesday evening until Saturday at 1:00pm, followed by exit interviews for all. No one left without a clear roadmap for follow-up work with professionals in their home towns. By Saturday afternoon, Peggie, Robin and Matt, as well as the entire camp staff, were both elated and exhausted as the families made their emotional departures. Staff debriefing was essential and planning for next year ended midday Sunday.

The clinicians were encouraged by the positive impact that many of the conceptual innovations of the camp program provided to these extremely difficult family relationship issues. The program brought highly conflicted co-parents and their children together to work on identified issues and placed them in working groups run by skilled leaders. The camp provided a rich array of activities and opportunities for connection and communication between family members, and clinical interventions were delivered wherever and whenever opportunity presented. Peggie, Robin and Matt helped build bridges to more positive rela-

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AFCC Member News

Alan S. Geismer, AFCC member from Boston, Massachusetts was honored by the Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts with the VLA Founders' Appreciation Award at its recent annual benefit. Alan was recognized for his leadership, commitment and dedication to the VLA, and the arts and cultural community of Massachusetts over the last two decades.

Dianna Gould-Saltman, AFCC member from Los Angeles, California received a special Certificate of Appreciation from the American Psychological Association's Division of Family Psychology (Div. 43) at the APA 116th Annual Convention, August 14-17, 2008 in Boston, Massachusetts. Dianna was honored for her longstanding commitment to interdisciplinary collaboration between psychologists, lawyers and judges.

Hon. Hugh Starnes, AFCC Past President from Fort Myers, Florida retired from the bench September 1, 2008 after thirty years of service at the Twentieth Judicial Circuit. Hugh served as AFCC President in 2005-2006, AFCC Florida Chapter President in 2004-2005 and is currently on the AFCC Board of Directors. Hugh's long list of awards spanning his career include outstanding jurist for the State of Florida by the Florida Chapter of the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers (1992), recipient of the David R. Thomas Child Advocate of the Year Award by the Children's Home Society (1995) and co-recipient of the Governor's Peace at Home Award: Stopping Domestic Violence by the Florida Supreme Court (1996). Hugh also served as a member of the Florida Supreme Court Committee on Families and Children in the Courts (1994-2005).

AFCC Staff Changes

Leslye Hunter joined the AFCC staff as full-time Associate Director beginning November 3, 2008. Leslye has practiced as a child custody evaluator, mediator, parenting coordinator, therapist and collaborative divorce family specialist. She served on the AFCC Board of Directors and as AFCC President (2004-2005), and since 2006 has been Chapter Services and Development Consultant.

Erin Sommerfeld has been promoted to Program Coordinator, effective November 3, 2008. Erin has served as AFCC's Administrative Assistant since July 2006.

Dave Vigliotta, AFCC Marketing and Development Manager, left AFCC on October 7, 2008 to work as a Communications Manager with the Energy Center of Wisconsin in Madison. Dave worked with AFCC for three years. He would like to thank all his colleagues at AFCC with whom he hopes to keep in touch.

Breaking Barriers

Continued from page 8

tionships where only alienation and estrangement had existed. The aligned parents learned the importance of the other parent in their children's lives and their interactions with all of the parents helped them understand other points of view. The rejected parents were grateful to be able to see their children, interact in more constructive ways with each other and learn other parents' experiences. The children not only felt heard, but found a group of peers with similar experiences where none had existed in their lives before. They all left reporting that they felt more normal and more hopeful. By the end of the camp, many of the children thought that future programs should focus on helping the parents communicate and co-parent more effectively.

It wasn't easy, but initial feedback suggests it was successful. The clinical team plans to follow-up with the families at the six-month point and to build on this pilot program next summer for five-and-a-half days (every family wanted it to be longer). Robin, Matt and Peggie, as well as the Common Ground Staff will all return. There are areas that need improvement, but we have the successful scaffolding on which to build. One challenge that emerged was the difficulty in obtaining commitments from those families who did not have a court order to attend. After interviewing 25 families, four of the five families who attended did so with a court order. While not all family members referred were accepted, conversations with AFCC custody evaluators and parenting coordinators helped our decision-making process.

Many of these families would not have had the opportunity to attend had it not been for the terrific support of AFCC members. They not only provided informed and thoughtful referrals, but they also provided private donations that allowed this program to proceed.

AFCC will host an advanced 3-hour workshop on this topic at its 46th Annual Conference, Children, Courts and Custody: Back to the Future or Full Steam Ahead? May 27-30, 2009 in New Orleans.

ACR Awards AFCC Executive Director

Peter Salem, M.A., AFCC Executive Director from Madison, Wisconsin, was awarded the John Haynes Distinguished Mediator Award at the Association for Conflict Resolution's Eighth Annual Conference, September 24-27, 2008 in Austin, Texas. The award is presented annually to a prominent and internationally recognized leader in mediation.

How Best to Find Out

Continued from page 5

that I mean that the parents must be allowed to give their points of view and be questioned and any expert evidence must be put and tested. But again, I think it quite justifiable that the issues for the children should be constantly reframed and reinforced and that issues relevant only to the parents, and plainly not very relevant to the children, should be filtered out. The role of attorney or lawyer in this respect, at a hearing, is to my mind invaluable. So often the truth is not as it appears to be and an objective advocacy on behalf of a child brings a sense of reality.

And so it is that I return to my opening observation. Custody cases have an element simply not shared by other court work. Children are effectively a party and yet, unless we are careful, a case concerning children can proceed without their issues being properly framed and without their needs and wants being firmly and clearly put. I favor a judicial system that is alive to this need, to ensure that custody cases proceed on issues and evidence that deal primarily with the children's welfare and not simply the wishes of parents.

Peter Boshier will present a plenary session on this topic at AFCC's 46th Annual Conference, Children, Courts and Custody: Back to the Future or Full Steam Ahead? May 27-30, 2009 in New Orleans.

Due to the limited amount of space in this newsletter, the article was published without footnotes. The entire article, with footnotes, can be accessed on the Resources for Professionals page on the AFCC Web site at www.afccnet.org/resources/resources_professionals.asp.

AFCC Supports Wingspread Dialogue in New Mexico

by David P. Levin, Esq.

Director of Court Alternatives, Second Judicial District Court, State of New Mexico

The Second Judicial District Court in Albuquerque, New Mexico hosted a program on *Domestic Violence and Family Courts*, immediately prior to AFCC's *Eighth International Symposium on Child Custody Evaluations*, September 25-27, 2008 at the Albuquerque Marriott.

The program served as an opportunity to bring together approximately 100 interdisciplinary domestic violence leaders in New Mexico to discuss the implications of the AFCC and National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ) Domestic Violence and Family Courts Project. New Mexico, an innovative leader in the field of domestic violence, sought to begin a dialogue on how to address the five tensions identified by the Report on the Wingspread Conference on Domestic Violence and Family Courts and other issues explored in the special domestic violence issue of the July 2008 *Family Court Review (FCR)*.

AFCC Executive Director Peter Salem opened the program with a presentation adapted from the July 2008 FCR article, *Beyond Politics and Positions: A Call for Collaboration Between Family Court and Domestic Violence Professionals*. AFCC Board member and Wingspread Report co-author Nancy Ver Steegh, followed with a presentation on the Report and subsequent research. Laura Bassein, AFCC member, mediator and program manager for the Court Alternatives Family Mediation Program, Second Judicial District Court, presented *Moving Toward Best Practices: Screening for Domestic Violence in Family Mediation*. Hon. Angela Jewell, a Second Judicial District Family Court Judge who specializes in domestic violence and Lynn Rosenthal, Executive Director of the New Mexico Coalition Against Domestic Violence, joined the other presenters for a panel discussion.

Plans are underway to sustain the energy inspired by the program, including a commitment for outreach beyond those who attended, collaboration between the various players and practical changes for the courts. The day, and AFCC's contribution, was invaluable to New Mexico.

AFCC Trainings in Baltimore, New Orleans and Chicago

AFCC is offering two-day training programs on parenting coordination, advanced parenting coordination, father involvement and advanced child custody for professionals who work with high-conflict families.

The trainings will take place in Baltimore, New Orleans and Chicago, and feature expert presenters Christine A. Coates, M.Ed., J.D., Marsha Kline Pruett, Ph.D., M.S.L., Robin M. Deutsch, Ph.D., Arnold Shienvold, Ph.D., Nancy W. Olesen, Ph.D. and Joan B. Kelly, Ph.D.

A description of each training, including hotel information and the registration form, can be found in the training brochure on the AFCC Web site at www.afccnet.org/training. *Early registration is recommended as trainings may sell out.* For additional information, please contact AFCC at afcc@afccnet.org or (608) 664-3750.

AFCC Chapter News

Arizona

The AFCC Arizona Chapter will present its Annual Conference, January 30-February 1, 2009 in Sedona. The conference theme is *Listening: Can You Hear Me Now?* to reflect the importance of true and effective communication in family court situations. The Friday night plenary features a *Night at the Movies* format, with movie and television clips showing the disastrous consequences of not listening. Saturday morning's plenary session brings the AFCC and NCJFCJ Wingspread Conference to Arizona, with speakers Billie Lee Dunford-Jackson, Peter Salem, Nancy Ver Steegh and Hon. Karen Adam—all of whom participated in Wingspread.

Workshops include topics on ethics, the fundamental right to parent, vicarious trauma, non-verbal communication and cues, Arizona's model parenting plans (which are being updated to reflect current research), cooperative vs. parallel parenting, international custody issues, visitation-resistant children and the critique of custody evaluations.

California

The AFCC California Chapter is currently preparing for its Annual Conference, February 6-8, 2009 in San Francisco, California at the Mark Hopkins Hotel. The Chapter has secured a special room rate of \$205. Registration and program information on the two-and-a-half day program will be available at www.afcc-ca.org after November 1, 2008. The California Chapter is embarking on a new initiative, which includes drafting a Resolution to redefine the issue of adequate resources for children in the family court for what it is—a public health issue—not simply a court resources issue. The Chapter is hopeful that other groups of legal and mental health professionals will partner with them in their efforts on this issue. The Chapter believes that if all organizations get behind this effort, they can ultimately have a positive impact on legislation and distribution of judicial resources for the children involved in their courts.

Colorado

The AFCC Colorado Chapter held its fourth and last critical discussion in the 2008 series on the *Perspectives of Family Court Assessments and Alternative Models*—an exploration of evaluation, representation and intervention in contested divorce cases. The program took place on September 12, 2008 at the University of Denver, Sturm College of Law. This discussion brought together the largest number of attendees, as well as participants from across the state.

The Chapter's half-day conference included a panel of local judicial representatives who spoke on the *Judicial Response to Assessment, Representation and Intervention Issues*. The panel members included Hon. Randy Arp,

Hon. Jann DuBois, Magistrate Elizabeth Leith and Magistrate Dinsmore Tuttle. Judge Arp, Magistrate Leith and Magistrate Tuttle are on the Colorado Chapter Board of Directors.

Florida

The AFCC Florida Chapter's 7th Annual Conference, *Thinking Outside the Box: Innovative Approaches to Families in the Courts*, is scheduled for February 27-28, 2009 at the Renaissance Tampa Hotel International Plaza. The Chapter is excited to continue its working relationship with the Office of State Court Administrators and the Family Law Section of the Florida Bar. The Florida Chapter Model Parenting Plan Committee is collaborating with the Florida Bar to develop model parenting plans in light of sweeping statutory changes effective October 1, 2008 that eliminate "custody" and provide for, more appropriately, "parenting plans."

Massachusetts

The AFCC Massachusetts Chapter welcomes seven new members to its Board of Directors: Hon. Jay Blitzman, Anne Cremonini, Jennifer Durand, Alan Geismer, Jessica Griffin, Ilene Mitchell and Hon. Geoffrey Wilson. The Chapter's Annual Dinner was held on September 18, 2008 and featured remarks by AFCC President Robin Deutsch. Most of the Chapter's activities this coming year will be focused on the area of cultural competency in the family and juvenile courts. This will be the featured topic at Roundtables throughout the state and at the Chapter's Annual Conference, April 3, 2009. The Chapter is pleased to announce its new Web site at www.maafcc.org.

AFCC Leadership Institute

AFCC held its first Leadership Institute for current and incoming Chapter leaders in Albuquerque, NM on September 25, 2008. Co-led by Maureen Robinson, author of *Boards that Work*, and Leslye Hunter, AFCC Chapter Services and Development Consultant, it was attended by representatives of all 11 AFCC Chapters including: Jack Moran, AZ; Sherrie Kibler-Sanchez and Thomas T. Lewis, CA; Michele Tipple, CO; Lee Schreiber, FL; Alexander Jones, MA; Michelle Henry and Art Nissenbaum, MO; Gary Debele, MN; Sharon Montgomery, NJ; Steve Abel and Rodney Wells, NY; Craig Perkins, ON; Louise Lee and David Eaker, TX. The opportunity for Chapter leaders to share ideas and learn new strategies for achieving Chapters' growth and sustainability was invaluable and enjoyed by all.

AFCC Award Nominations

AFCC is seeking nominees for the following awards to be presented at AFCC's 46th Annual Conference in New Orleans, LA, May 27-30, 2009.

John E. VanDuzer Distinguished Service Award:

Recognizes outstanding contributions and/or achievements by members of AFCC.

Stanley Cohen Research Award: Recognizes outstanding research and/or research achievements in the field of family and divorce.

Irwin Cantor Innovative Program Award: Recognizes innovation in court-connected or court-related programs. Nominations for this award should be for programs, not individuals.

If you would like to nominate someone for one of the awards, please email your nomination to AFCC in care of Erin Sommerfeld at esommerfeld@afccnet.org. Please specify the award for which you are submitting a nomination. Include your name, address and phone number along with the same information for the nominee. Please include a statement of no more than 600 words as to why you believe the nominee is a good candidate for the award. The nomination deadline is March 15, 2009.

Electronic submissions in Word or WordPerfect are preferred. For further information on award criteria and nominating instructions, please visit the "Awards Committee" page on the AFCC Web site at www.afccnet.org/about/awards_committee.asp.

AFCC Board of Directors Nominations

The AFCC Nominating Committee is seeking the names of individuals to serve on the AFCC Board of Directors. Recommended individuals must be AFCC members and have an interest and knowledge of AFCC and its work.

Nominations must be received by January 15, 2009, in order to be considered by the committee prior to election at AFCC's 46th Annual Conference, May 27-30, 2009 in New Orleans, LA.

If you or another member you know is interested in serving on the AFCC Board of Directors, please forward name, contact information, resume and letter of intent to:

Hon. William C. Fee
 Chair, Nominating Committee
 c/o AFCC
 6525 Grand Teton Plaza
 Madison, WI 53719
 Fax: (608) 664-3751
 Email: afcc@afccnet.org

Child Custody Evaluations Survey by the University of Illinois

The University of Illinois is conducting a survey to better understand the contextual circumstances that affect custody evaluators' decision-making processes. The study results will also help improve training for custody evaluators. This project is being conducted by Dr. Jennifer Hardesty at the University of Illinois and Dr. Jason Hans at the University of Kentucky with funding from the University of Illinois Campus Research Board. To be eligible, you must have completed a professional custody evaluation for a United States court system in the last 10 years. The survey will take about 15-20 minutes to complete. If you have questions or would like to participate, contact Megan Haselschwerdt at mhasels2@uiuc.edu or (217) 333-6924.

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AFCC presents two *NEW* books

Innovations in Family Law Practice

In this 171-page book, six chapters describe recent innovations in family law practice. Learn what makes for an ineffective family lawyer, how to run a family law self-help center and about the evolution of the Family Court Duty Counsel Program in Ontario. Examine how the family law field is changing through the use of collaborative practice, how to unbundle legal services, and how to use cooperative negotiation agreements. Edited by Kelly Browe Olson and Nancy Ver Steegh, this book presents an inspiring guide to new developments in practicing family law.

Innovations in Interventions with High Conflict Families

High conflict families continue to challenge professionals who work with separating and divorcing parents. Edited by Linda B. Fieldstone and Christine A. Coates, this 225-page volume of six chapters discusses topics such as the difference between high conflict, alienating behavior, and domestic abuse and how to reconnect children with absent parents. Explore a high conflict divorce education program and bringing co-parent counseling services to high-conflict low-income families. Also discussed are two recent additions to the field: mental health consultation in child custody cases and parenting coordination.

Quantity		Price	Member Price	Total
_____	Innovations in Family Law Practice	\$40.00	\$34.00	_____
_____	Innovations in Interventions with High Conflict Families	\$40.00	\$34.00	_____

Shipping & Handling (U.S. only)
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Member Profile: Ernie Sanchez

Continued from page 4

What do you like most about AFCC?

AFCC has been the leader in providing outstanding continuing education and training for court-connected and private mediators, evaluators, attorneys, judges and the general public. AFCC has been the innovator that provides conferences that do not shy away from controversy but instead present the pros and cons of any issue. It is truly cutting edge, present day, to-the-minute professionalism at its best.

What do you enjoy doing in your free time?

I enjoy camping, playing my guitar, watching a good movie and relaxing in our backyard.

What is your proudest personal achievement?

Publishing my ideas. I never thought they were so important until someone else gave me validation by publishing them for a greater audience.

Your wife (Sherrie Kibler-Sanchez) is President of the AFCC California Chapter—what has your role been like as First Husband?

My role as First Husband has always been to be as supportive as I can be. I am very proud of my wife. She truly embodies the essence, goals and aspirations of AFCC. She deserves a lot of credit for the programs that have been established in the Los Angeles Superior Court. She was the initial brainchild/creator of the Pre-Contempt, Contemnors Group that has been refined to the current, six week *Parenting Without Conflict* counseling program for high conflict parents. She was also the initial brainchild/creator for the Parents and Children Together program currently being used as an orientation program prior to child custody mediation. She is *the* innovator. She's an amazing woman. She has the conviction to continue the work that Meyer Elkin, Jeannie Ames and other renowned predecessors began. I just watch in awe!



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For more information, contact AFCC at afcc@afccnet.org or (608) 664-3750.



Upcoming AFCC Conferences and Trainings

AFCC Conferences

AFCC 46th Annual Conference

May 27-30, 2009
 Sheraton New Orleans
 New Orleans, Louisiana

AFCC Regional Training Conference

November 5-7, 2009
 Peppermill Resort Spa Casino
 Reno, Nevada

AFCC 47th Annual Conference

June 2-5, 2010
 Sheraton Denver
 Denver, Colorado

AFCC 48th Annual Conference

June 1-4, 2011
 Hilton Orlando Bonnet Creek Resort
 Orlando, Florida

AFCC Training Programs

Parenting Coordination: Working with High Conflict Families

Christine A. Coates, M.Ed., J.D.
 December 8-9, 2008
 Baltimore, Maryland

Fathers Parent Differently Than Mothers: Implications for Children and Families Before, During or After Divorce

Marsha Kline Pruett, Ph.D., M.S.L.
 December 10-11, 2008
 Baltimore, Maryland

Parenting Coordination: Working with High Conflict Families

Robin M. Deutsch, Ph.D.
 February 9-10, 2009
 New Orleans, Louisiana

Attachment, Alienation and Access: Advanced Interventions for Parenting Coordinators

Arnold Shienvold, Ph.D.
 February 11-12, 2009
 New Orleans, Louisiana

AFCC Chapter Conferences

New York Chapter Annual Conference

November 7, 2008
 Association of the Bar of the City of New York in Manhattan
 New York, New York

Arizona Chapter Annual Conference

January 30-February 1, 2009
 Hilton Sedona Resort and Spa
 Sedona, Arizona

California Chapter Annual Conference

February 6-8, 2009
 The Mark Hopkins Hotel on Nob Hill
 San Francisco, California

Florida Chapter Annual Conference

February 27-28, 2009
 Renaissance Hotel/International Mall
 Tampa, Florida

www.afccnet.org

