

# THE CENTER LETTER

Volume 14, Issue 3

OCTOBER 2020



## THE MEDIATION CENTER OF THE PACIFIC

### REQUESTS FOR MEDIATION KEEP GROWING!

The MCP staff and Board of Directors are so very grateful to our many friends and supporters whose generous gifts over the past two months exceeded our annual solicitation goal, and enabled us to continue meeting the large volume of requests for mediation, particularly in the area of family matters.

In the recently ended fiscal year July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2020, despite moving operations to our new building and immediately pivoting services due to the Governor's shelter-in-place order, MCP served 7,210 people (an increase of 693 people from the prior year) and managed 1,573 cases, including opening 1,436 new cases. 455 divorce, post-divorce, and custody cases were mediated (more than double from the prior year) with approximately 53% of the cases resulting in written agreements.

In response to the pandemic and the moratorium on evictions, MCP continued to support and grow the Rapid Response Landlord-Tenant Mediation Program. Between May 11 and September 15, 2020, 56 landlord-tenant cases were managed. While 16 mediation sessions were conducted, a majority of the tenants were directed to the City and County of Honolulu's Household Hardship Relief Fund that provides assistance for Oahu residents who have experienced a loss of income and/or increased financial need directly resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. Through the Fund, tenants were able to qualify for payment of back rent owed to their landlord, as well as payments that will cover the rent due in the coming months, through the remainder of 2020.

As a result of the pandemic, MCP has also experienced an increase in requests for foreclosure, condominium, and neighbor mediations, as well as family conferences through the Kupuna Pono Program that assists families caring for an elder family member. MCP is fortunate to have a resilient,



flexible staff who have steadfastly juggled the continuous requests for mediations, remotely and at the office. We also salute the many mediators who have adapted to mediating via telephone, videoconference, online, and even in person, donned in masks and face shields. They are true heroes!

***Mahalo to all. We are in this together!***

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***Bringing people together to talk,  
negotiate and  
resolve conflict creatively.***

## STRENGTHENING FAMILY MEDIATION

The stress and frustration caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in more complex, emotional mediations, particularly in the family arena. To address these challenges and maintain quality services, MCP implemented a series of trainings and Mediator Brown Bag gatherings over the past few months. Topics have included: Developing Pivotal Agreements; Working With Attorneys; Creating Time-Sharing Agreements When Parents Have Different Values; Resolving Financial Issues; Negotiating New Time-Sharing Agreements During a Pandemic; and more.



MCP is fortunate to work with many thoughtful mediators who are willing to share their expertise, as well as other professionals in the community who generously donate their time for these learning sessions. On August 12th, William "Bill" Darrah and Thomas "Tom" Stirling, retired family law attorneys who now mediate for MCP, provided tips and tools on working with attorneys in mediation, and engaged the participating mediators in a subsequent lively discussion.



On August 19th, Trisha Kent-White, a Certified Financial Planner and attorney who is the Vice-President of Honolulu Financial Partners, LLC, conducted an excellent interactive workshop on Divorce and Finances in Mediation. Trisha covered mediation strategies for property division, retirement, the children's expenses, debt, retirement, and taxes. Mediators appreciated how Trisha covered these complex issues with a clear, concise approach.

## FINE-TUNING MEDIATION SKILLS VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE



Thanks to Special Programs Coordinator Katie Ranney, MCP continued to provide regular Zoom mediation workshops and mentoring sessions for mediators to fine-tune their skills. In addition to conducting multiple one-hour workshops on basic and advanced Zoom mediation skills, staff coordinated and conducted a workshop on facilitating family conferences via Zoom in July, as well as two one-hour workshops on Mediating Rapid Response landlord-tenant mediations in early September.

## COLLABORATIONS & COMMUNITY OUTREACH

While the pandemic prevented MCP from holding in-person trainings at Hale O Pono, the staff maintained a busy schedule of outreach and training via Zoom. On July 30th, Executive Director Tracey Wiltgen participated in a 1-hour panel presentation on Negotiation for 350 participants with the Hawaii Business News Leadership Conference. Tracey also participated in four different panel presentations with representatives from Legal Aid Society of Hawaii, landlord attorneys, Judge Joseph Cardoza, Chair of the

Access to Justice Commission, and others to discuss and promote the State Rental Assistance Program and the important role of mediation in helping landlords and tenants negotiate payment plans.

On October 3rd, Special Programs Coordinator Katie Ranney and volunteer mediators Chuck Buckla and Kendra Epstein (pictured at left) participated in a landlord-tenant CARES Resource fair in Kapolei, in collaboration with the City & County of Honolulu and the Council for Native Hawaiian Advancement. More than 200 people attended the event.



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## THE EARL M. CHAPMAN MEDIATION CENTER *OF THE PACIFIC*

MCP's Board of Directors is excited to announce the name of MCP's new building as:

### The Earl M. Chapman Mediation Center *of the Pacific*,

Earl Chapman was a former mediator, mentor, Board President, and generous donor to MCP. It was Earl's vision that MCP have a building of its own to ensure its future as a critical resource in Oahu's communities. To support that vision, on December 10, 1993, Earl generously established a building fund for MCP. Over the last few years, the Earl and Margery Chapman Family Foundation continued to generously support and grow that fund. Thanks to Earl, the Chapman Family Foundation, and many other extremely generous donors, MCP was able to purchase and move into Hale O Pono this past February.



While it will take a few months to obtain the building permits and install the signage, MCP will host a remote blessing of Hale O Pono later this year. Next year, when we are able to have an in-person celebration at the building, we will host a reception to thank all of MCP's generous supporters who helped to make the dream of MCP having a permanent home a reality!

## CHANGES TO SUPPORT QUALITY, ACCESSIBLE SERVICES

Despite the many challenges created by the pandemic over the past six months, the MCP Board of Directors and staff continued to renovate and outfit the interior of Hale O Pono to support the provision of quality, accessible services. Some changes at MCP help to ensure the safety of staff, clients, and mediators. In-person services are currently limited to one session each in the morning and in the afternoon; a plexi-glass shield was installed in the receptionist area; and the waiting room was re-arranged to support social distancing. In addition, privacy tinting was installed on all mediation room doors to protect the privacy of the parties while in the rooms.



The staff was excited to receive and set up the new training room furniture. Equipped with furniture that can easily be re-arranged, MCP has been using the training room for safely conducting in-person mediations involving more than two people. While all trainings are currently conducted remotely, MCP is ready to conduct in-person trainings in the near future.

Finally, thanks to support from the CARES Funds, MCP will soon be installing videoconference equipment in all mediation rooms. Not all clients or mediators have the needed equipment or

bandwidth to participate in mediation remotely. With the new equipment and staff technical assistance, MCP will be able to serve these clients and mediators to comfortably and safely participate in videoconference mediations, which are how a majority of mediations are currently run. Additionally, when tenants, who need help applying for State or City rental assistance programs, contact MCP, they can receive technical assistance in a private mediation room. The new equipment will ensure that MCP's services are truly accessible to all!

## **MARK YOUR CALENDARS**

**A Special Presentation by Nina Meierding**

***Exploring Best Practices and Approaches in Domestic Mediation:  
Divorce, Custody, Family, Guardianship, Special Education, and Beyond***

**Monday November 9, 2020 12:00 – 1:15 p.m. (Online via Zoom) - FREE**

**Co-sponsored by**

**The Mediation Center of the Pacific**

**The William S. Richardson School of Law Conflict Management Program**

To Register go to:

<https://hawaii.zoom.us/meeting/register/tjYrf-mprzwoE9Purtk4q-R3qN0QHcfM5Uxe>

### **Basic Mediation Training**

*(Online via Zoom)*

\$600 per person

**Friday Dec. 4 & Friday Dec. 11, 1:00 - 6:00 p.m.**

**Sat. December 5 & Sat. Dec. 12, 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.**

*Basic Mediation offers an introduction to a facilitative model of mediation and the core skills of effective listening, asking powerful questions, maintaining neutrality, interest identification, negotiation, agreement writing, ethical considerations, and managing challenges.*

### **Accelerated Divorce Mediation Training**

\$600 per person

**Thursday, Feb. 18, Friday, Feb. 19, & Sat. Feb. 20, 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.**

*Divorce Mediation offers a custom model for a neutral mediator to assist divorcing couples in negotiating agreements on property division and custody and visitation issues, while focusing on the "best interests of the child."*

**Go to [www.mediatehawaii.org](http://www.mediatehawaii.org) to register for trainings or contact  
[mcpadmin@mediatehawaii.org](mailto:mcpadmin@mediatehawaii.org) for additional information.**

**\* Seating in trainings is limited. Early registration is encouraged.**