

Business Notebook

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Main Street Mediation helps resolve life conflicts

Are you struggling with conflict in your life? Not sure where to turn? Main Street Mediation and Communication Services can help.

In the 20 years since they opened, Main Street Mediation has worked successfully with a broad spectrum of people in conflict — including school districts, families, businesses, parents developing Parenting Plans, neighbors, CEOs, nuns, work-release prisoners and governmental agencies.

The term “mediation” covers a wide range of services, including traditional mediation, facilitating challenging dialogues, conflict management and prevention, coaching and strategic planning.

“We participate as a neutral third party,” explains mediator Sarah Bergdahl. “We do not advocate for

Sarah Bergdahl, founder of Main Street, has a masters degree in intercultural relations with a specialty in intercultural conflict.

People’s cultural identities can heavily influence the way they interpret and respond to the world around them; communication styles are often

a reflection of values and beliefs.

“When values clash, people frustrate each other inadvertently, even when they want to get along,” says Bergdahl. “We support

people in understanding different perspectives so that important needs of all parties can be reflected in mutually agreeable outcomes.”

Main Street Mediation helps people create a safe environment for making difficult decisions, resolving conflict and maintaining relationships. The process may look different in different contexts: it can include large groups, or just two people and a mediator. Main Street tailors each mediation process to meet the needs of the people and organizations involved.

The cost of a drawn-out conflict can include financial drain, health problems, depression, missed work, loss of sleep and appetite, loss of employ-



Sarah Bergdahl

ment, divorce, feelings of anger, and sometimes even violence.

“People are not born with collaborative problem-solving skills,” Bergdahl says. “Over a lifetime, people develop strategies to get their needs met that may have worked well in one context, but do not transfer well to the next.”

Avoidance and perpetual accommodation are two common responses to conflict, which often prolong the problem.

“A school administrator once said that he felt like a communication failure when he had to call a mediator,” says Bergdahl. “After the successful mediation, he saw the process as another tool to support people in moving toward settlement.”

There are many benefits to mediation, including confidentiality, sessions that are less expensive and less time-consuming than legal options, legally binding outcomes that are mutually agreed upon by participants, and the improvement of relationships between parties — especially long-term relationships.

Take the first step toward conflict resolution and call Main Street Mediation at 391-1374.