

CONFLICT RESOLUTION INSTITUTE NEWSLETTER

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CONFLICT RESOLUTION FIELD RESPONDS TO ECONOMIC DOWNTURN



Teaching Peace Executive Director Deb Witzel (left) and Program Manager Amanda Mahan

The current economic downturn is affecting practitioners in the conflict resolution field, including Teaching Peace Executive Director Deb Witzel and Program Manager Amanda Mahan. Teaching Peace, founded in 1994, is focused on restorative justice in the community of Longmont, Colorado.

Witzel does not believe that she will see the full impact of the economic downturn on Teaching Peace until about mid-year, but she is already beginning to see changes. Teaching Peace holds two major fundraising events each year. One is by direct mail and the other is a dessert tasting contest called Sweet Peace, which takes place in November. The dessert tasting contest was held for the first time in 2007. The event had 300 attendees and raised \$10,000. When it was held this past November it had half the number of attendees and only raised \$2000, which is only about enough to cover one staff person for one month.

In order to offset their reduced funding, Teaching Peace has had to raise their fees with the hopes that those able to afford it will pay the increased fees. For those who cannot pay the full fee, financial assistance is offered. Last year almost half of the people who came through the program used financial assistance and it is expected the percentage will increase this year. There has also been an increase in the amount of bounced checks that have been received.

Teaching Peace has also seen a change in their clientele. There has been an increase in the number of young adults referred to the program. This may be the result of an increase in young adult crimes, but Deb Witzel believes that the increase in referrals is due to the Longmont Police Department's belief that restorative justice programs are effective and their push to educate patrol officers about the program. In fact, while many budgets are being cut in the city of Longmont, Teaching Peace has actually seen an 11% increase in their contract for services with the city.

Despite the decrease in fundraising, there has been an increase in the number of volunteers involved with Teaching Peace. Amanda Mahan believes this is likely a result of President Obama's call to service. Teaching Peace has always relied on volunteers to facilitate their processes, support events and work on different projects. So, although the increase in volunteers is helpful, it does not offset program costs. Teaching Peace is also in need of more Spanish speaking volunteers to handle Spanish speaking clients to keep up with the population change in the community.

In response to the economic forecast, Deb Witzel believes that she will have to focus more on writing grants and fundraising. But despite the dire economic predictions, she is still optimistic about the future of Teaching Peace. "The challenge

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is greater around financing this organization this year, but I am very hopeful”, she says “You know, I guess the thing that comes up for me is, ‘Oh, a challenge? Bring it.’ You know, I love it. I am excited by the opportunity. For me it’s an opportunity to ask farther, to reach out bigger. The people who have been giving to us, they have friends. And this is the year that I ask them to ask their friends. So, I don’t feel like we’ve even begun to reach as far and wide as we can. And that’s what we’ll be doing this year. So, it’s a challenge, but I am sure that we will meet it.”

During a time when economic speculations can be wildly inaccurate, it is hard to predict what effects this economy will have on the environmental conflict resolution field. Many remain optimistic, though, and see the downturn in the economy as an opportunity to introduce alternative dispute resolution (ADR) to a wider variety of people and problems. Paul Aldretti, Senior Program Manager at CDR Associates in Boulder, said practitioners should “help potential clients and decision makers understand that ADR increases efficiency and the design of effective strategies while reducing long-term costs in economic, human, time, natural and other types of resources.” If the current demand for practitioners is low, it is not for lack of environmental conflicts that need creative solutions, but is instead due to a lack of public awareness of the benefits of conflict resolution services, Aldretti said.



Paul Aldretti, Senior Program Manager
CDR Associates

According to Aldretti, environmental conflicts will increase with changing political dynamics, decreasing resources, and added pressure on decision makers to make sustainable choices. This should increase the demand for environmental conflict resolution services. Mark Loye, Director of Jefferson County Mediation Services and environmental conflict resolution consultant, has experience working in conflicts related to park lands, mining, endangered species, landfills, and hazardous waste. He thinks “that the new administration’s protectionist policies will provide great potential for conflict resolution work.” Loye noted the seemingly contradicting goals of government’s environmental protection and industry’s extraction practices, and wondered, “As land use policies change, who will be favored, how will it be managed, and how will America’s basic needs be reconciled?”

These questions and many others are exactly the types of con-

licts for which environmental conflict resolution practitioners are prepared. Aldretti noted the need for “decisions and strategies that extend into the far future,” and agreed with Loye that the new administration’s policies will provide opportunity. He said that the “new energy economy,” including infrastructure that is necessary to generate and transport renewable energy, will open a window of opportunity for practitioners.

Aldretti and Loye each have over twenty years experience in environmental work, possibly making it easier to see opportunity. Those new to the field may have trouble staying optimistic, Loye said. “People trying to hang a shingle are worried. They wonder will the economy help or hurt us.” He sees less speculation from more seasoned practitioners who may share Aldretti’s perspective. Aldretti said it is hard to tell if there is real or only perceived current shortage in projects, and it is harder to predict the future, “I believe the reality is that it’s too early to really tell.”

Practitioners at Longmont Mediation Services, a conflict resolution resource for Longmont residents, said that the irregular case patterns of past years have continued during the economic crisis. Longmont’s Susan Spaulding is a Community Relations Specialist. She works in various conflict areas including housing, family, racial and cross cultural issues, neighborhood, and disturbances. Given the widespread nature of the services that are offered and the continuously irregular caseloads from week to week, the continuation in irregular cases might indicate that conflict has not increased to a significant level as a consequence of the economic crisis.

It may just be too early to see a significant change, but an initial assumption that frequency of cases has not increased does not necessarily signify that individuals and families are coping well with the stress and frustration of the economic crisis. Edwin M. Rios works at SAMHC Behavioral Services, an institution in Tucson, Arizona, that offers crisis services to individuals who are suffering from personality crisis or substance abuse. Rios uses consultation and inclusive work with patients and their families to properly respond to a patient’s crises and get them back on their feet. Working at SAMHC for nine years, Rios has seen an explosion of cases within the past year. The social and health services seem to have experienced a boom in clientele and office-hours, Rios observed.

Where conflict resolution services, such as those offered by Spaulding, have a role in more long-term and structured response, the economic crisis has been met with crisis response services in order to deal with individual crises. Rios said most of the cases they are receiving involving personal trauma and substance abuse are a result of job loss and financial difficulties. Given that it is individuals that are being laid-off, crisis

response services are an immediate and necessary service in order to prevent individual frustrations from exploding into group conflicts. Perhaps the separate roles of crisis response and mediation services can join to offer comprehensive solutions to the potential conflicts that individual frustrations are likely to affect.

Mediators can play a role in offering services for the new challenges in negotiation facing many Americans. The national practitioner organization, Association for Conflict Resolution, has started a new task force to develop the use of mediation in foreclosure negotiations (<http://www.acrnet.org/publications/ACRUpdate85.htm>). New Jersey has already established such a program (for more information, see <http://www.judiciary.state.nj.us/pressrel/pr081016c.htm>).

As Americans continue to feel the effects of the struggling U.S. economy taking its toll on their pocketbooks and stress levels, they should be mindful of the effects those stresses contribute to conflict in their daily lives. Although people's reactions to the downturn in the economy vary, stress is one factor that increases when economic times are tight, according to Philip Arreola, the Regional Director of the U.S. Department of Justice Community Relations Service, Rocky Mountain Region. Ron Ludwig, the Executive Director of the Conflict Center in Denver also says that "with folks out of work, there will be increased opportunities for family conflicts." In order to reduce stress before it is manifested in conflict one should seek ways to help manage stress before it gets out of control.

What can one do to reduce conflicts caused by stress in their daily lives during these hard economic times? Arreola says that it is important to seek help before things get too tough. He notes that there are a variety of counseling services provided by both nonprofit and private organizations that can assist with this. Samuel Gordon of Judicial Arbitration and Mediation Services (JAMS) in Denver also says that we should be upfront about our stress and concerns both in personal and business relationships so that our motives are not misread. Ludwig says that it is helpful to have a "toolbox filled with options, that allows people to deal better with the stresses they face in any situation, including hard economic times." The Conflict Center is one local resource that would be well equipped to help develop a "toolbox" as they are an educational group that "teaches people the skills they need to positively deal with everyday conflict situations and to deal with anger issues so that they do not become destructive." In these economically challenging times, we need to learn to take care of ourselves and also let others know if we are struggling, which will hopefully help to stop conflicts before they start.

-- Fernando Ospina, Lindsey Sexton, Edwin A. Rios and

Holly Guthrey

CRI TO HOST
2009 ACR ENVIRONMENT
& PUBLIC POLICY SECTION
CONFERENCE
JUNE 11 - 13, 2009

*MANAGING CLIMATE CHANGE THROUGH
COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE:
ADDRESSING POLICY CHANGES
GLOBALLY AND LOCALLY*

On June 11 -13, 2009, the Association for Conflict Resolution's Environment and Public Policy Section and the University of Denver's Conflict Resolution Institute will co-host a conference in Denver, Colorado. It will bring together leading practitioners from the fields of environmental conflict resolution, collaborative governance and deliberative democracy with leaders from businesses and NGO's, scientists, elected officials and staff at all levels of government.

This conference will focus on strategies, tools and cutting-edge initiatives to help local communities, regions, states and national governments address the vulnerabilities, challenges and opportunities associated with mitigation of and adaptation to global climate change.

The gathering is intended to be not just as a stand-alone event, but also the foundation and catalyst for the development and implementation of new collaborative efforts to address this global imperative. For further details go to <http://www.du.edu/con-res/center/June2009ACREPPConference.html>



FACULTY SPOTLIGHT – TIM SISK



Timothy D. Sisk is Associate Dean and Associate Professor at the Joseph Korbel School of International Studies and Director of the Center for Sustainable Development and International Peace, a research and policy institute at the School.

Sisk serves as an Associate Fellow of the Geneva Centre for Security Policy in Geneva, Switzerland, and is involved in a major research project for the U.N. Development Program on statebuilding in war torn countries. His latest book is titled International Mediation in Civil Wars: Bargaining with Bullets (Routledge 2009).

CRI: *How did you become involved with the Conflict Resolution Institute?*

TS: I got to know Karen [Feste, CRI Co-Director] in 1998, when I first got here. She was just beginning to put together the program...and I worked with her because of my experience at USIP (United States Institute for Peace). I helped design the core curriculum... and I've been on the faculty committee since the very beginning. I was interim director when Karen was on sabbatical.

Which courses do you teach here?

The principal course I teach, which addresses this field, is on postwar peace building, which looks at the current international efforts to build sustain-

able peace after civil war. The course involves an initial look at conflict assessment and the implications of peace agreements for postwar implementation. Students do a comprehensive analysis of postwar peacebuilding in a country of their choice.

What qualities or perspectives do conflict resolution students bring to the classroom?

The interdisciplinary training that they have and the concern with the practical implications of theory; how the theory can help inform practice and policy. That, I think, is the most engaging part of ConRes students. Most of them tend to have some kind of experience that they bring to the table that other students might not. So conflict resolution students bring practical field experience, particularly those who are former Peace Corps volunteers or others.

What does the future hold in the field of conflict resolution?

That's interesting. Most of the recent work these days goes in two directions: one looks at the...social psychological aspects of conflict management -- very important in my field, civil wars where there are questions of relative status. Another is the deep economic drivers of conflict...I think we have a lot of good theory that looks at environmental deprivation in conflict, environmental scarcity and violence...and a lot of good theory around ethnic conflict and constructive identity, but [we do not have much in] the interaction of all these. I think this is the real frontier for the field, particularly when you look at the outbreak of major civil war.

The other big area is helping with the effects of climate change, where we have

to have stronger theoretical approaches that can show how climate change induced economic, environmental and cultural changes may in fact be conflict inducing.

What career opportunities do you see for current or prospective students?

It depends on whether they are domestic or international. I can speak most to the international arena. It is pretty clear the most development approaches today emphasize multi-party stakeholders. They emphasize conflict resolution themes; the ability to reach consensus...If someone was smart enough to really specialize not just in health and conflict,...but in the international arena, working with major pharmaceuticals and local NGO's, that would be a very interesting area. And there is an enduring demand in international organizations, such as the U.N., that are working in this field.

What advice would you offer to current students or those considering the field?

Write a really good thesis. Really take the time to have a strong methodology for the thesis and to include up-to-the-moment, cutting-edge, methodological orientations...a mixed method. Don't just write up a think piece, but really show that not only do you have the substance skills to write a thesis and say something important, but that you have the research skills coming out of it, because that is what employers are looking for. They look for people that have a good core knowledge, but also, absolutely, the real ability to work with complicated research design and methodologies. That's what I think is most important.

Korbel School Associate Dean Sisk can be reached at tsisk@du.edu.

CRIB NOTES FROM THE CRI ADVISORY BOARD

The Conflict Resolution Institute (CRI) at DU is one of a small, but growing number of academic programs that recognizes the increasing importance of conflict management, whether that conflict exists between individuals or nations. Yet, CRI stands at an important crossroads. It has existed and grown partly thanks to a multi-year grant from the Luce Foundation. As that grant comes to an end within the next two years, CRI needs to find other financial resources to support its students and its operations. That is no small feat in today's economy, but is necessary for the financial health of the program.

directing a substantial portion of our meetings to developing fundraising strategies and to recruiting additional board members with expertise in fundraising. We also, however, are dedicated to maintaining the program's twin pillars of instruction grounded in research and internships that give students practical experience in the field. As a board, we value the goals the program is dedicated to achieving and will continue to work hard in support of those goals. Look for CRIB Notes to be an ongoing feature in the CRI newsletter.

Next month: Board member profiles

CRI's Board of Directors is fully committed to the ongoing financial success of the program. Indeed, our mission is first and foremost to ensure that success. To that end, we have been

-- David Price,
Advisory Board Member

CONFLICT RESOLUTION INSTITUTE WORKING PAPER SERIES

INTRODUCES FISHER PAPER ON SOCIAL-PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACH

#6. -- **Contributions of Social Psychology to the Analysis and Resolution of International Conflict**

2008. Ronald J. Fisher

The working paper explores the applications and implications of the social-psychological approach to analyzing and ameliorating intercommunal and international conflict. This analysis attempts to identify the levels in the escalation process where certain factors emerge and have their primary influence on counterproductive and destructive interaction. The approach hopes to provide a more integrated, cyclical and systematic understanding of how cognitive and group factors drive the escalation of destructive intergroup and international conflict.

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CONFLICT RESOLUTION GRADUATE STUDENT ASSOCIATION

New Year, New CRGSA!

Greetings from the newly instated University of Denver Conflict Resolution Graduate Student Association officers. January was an exciting month for this nation, holding both the hope and promise of change; and it was no different at DU, where our newly elected CRGSA members took office.

This year's officers are: President Edwin Rios, Vice President Cory Stufflebeem, Treasurer Katie Coleman, Secretary Kim VanKirk, and Activities Coordinators Ashlee Stadig and Loren Knaster.

As the new representatives, we have two primary goals for this year:

- To form closer relationships among students and faculty, both within the Conflict Resolution program and among the University of Denver's other graduate programs
- To provide ample opportunities for networking and skills training within the field.

We are also looking forward to assisting with the planning of this year's Conflict Resolution Week, October 12 - 16, 2009. We held our first social event on Tuesday, January 26, when we met at Jordon's Pub for Trivia Night. We had a great turnout and a really fun night! We hope to match and exceed that level of participation and enthusiasm in our events throughout the year. Check your e-mail for future events, both social and professional. If anyone has any suggestions for possible events or would be interested in volunteering time for networking or skills-related events, please contact Ashlee Stadig at ashlee.stadig@du.edu. On behalf of CRGSA, we wish you the best in 2009 and hope to see you at one of our upcoming events!

-- Edwin, Cory, Katie, Kim, Ashlee and Loren

DONATE YOUR BOOKS

Are your shelves overflowing with books? Please consider donating your used books to the Conflict Resolution Institute Student Library.

The CRI Student Library is a unique resource for students, specializing in mediation, environmental policy, psychology, international studies, research and evaluation and other areas of focus within the field of conflict resolution.

The Library also contains materials specific to Center for Research and Practice grants, including cultural elements of Trinidad and Tobago, and political challenges of the Republic of Georgia and the Middle East.



For more information or inquiries, please e-mail cricrp@du.edu or call (303) 871-7685.

Thank you for your support.

CRI UPDATE

We are saddened to announce the departure of JoAnne Smith. JoAnne has been a critical resource for students and the Institute Directors alike.

Her calming presence and thorough knowledge of University policies and procedures have successfully guided many students through applying, orientation, classes and writing and defending a thesis -- seeing them to graduation.

JoAnne was also an asset in the day-to-day management of department administrative tasks and in taking on a variety of special projects.

JoAnne will use this opportunity to pursue her real estate career with Prudential full time. We will miss her, but we wish her the best of luck in all of her future ventures.

-- Karen Feste, Tamra Pearson d'Estrée
and Autumn Gorman



ALUMNI IN THE FIELD

Pearl Bell: Conflict Center

Although Manager of Operations is Pearl Bell's official title at the Conflict Center, her job encompasses much more. She is responsible for the smooth running of everything from the building and maintenance, to class registrations and court reporting, as well as managing the Conflict Center Social Norming Program. "For the past three years, we piloted a Bullying Prevention Program using social norming techniques. We hope to expand this program for use with other social violence issues like teen dating violence and gang violence."

Pearl considers herself fortunate to also be able to teach classes: adult anger and conflict management, and youth emotional intelligence and critical decision making.

Pearl graduated from the Conflict Resolution program with a dual degree in International Studies and a certificate in Alternative Dispute Resolution in 2005.

When asked how her work at the University of Denver helped prepare her for her current position, Pearl replied "My knowledge and background in conflict resolution directly applies to the skills that we teach at The Conflict Center. My knowledge of theory and research has assisted me in our program evaluation efforts and helps strengthen



Pearl Bell

The Conflict Center's credibility and status regarding best practices in the field."

"Not only are these skills [obtained in the MA program] directly related to my profession, they also help me everyday in working with coworkers on problem solving and building relationships. The conflict skills are a cornerstone for the daily operation of The Conflict Center in every way we interact with clients and with each other."

Pearl's internship was at the Institute for Multi-track Diplomacy in Washington, DC, where she worked with dialogue groups and grant writing. She considers the skills gained there helped her obtain her current position, and the experience of working with groups of people and in a team helped prepare her for the work environment.

Her advice for current students:

- I. Get practical experience applying the skills and theories you are learning. The more you are able to get such experience, the more effective and proficient you will become at modeling this behavior for others.
- II. Self awareness. Practice. Patience. They are the three cornerstones for improving conflict resolution skills and being able to assist others.

WE ARE MODIFYING OUR MAILING LIST

We are currently updating our newsletter mailing list to include address corrections and delivery preferences. In an effort to support conservation, we are asking recipients to notify CRI concerning change of address, removal from mailing list, or willingness to receive newsletter electronically rather than hard copy. Both to conserve trees and to save increased mailing costs, we are asking you to consider whether or not an electronic copy might better meet your lifestyle. Please e-mail Autumn at cricrp@du.edu with the information printed below and "mailing list" in the subject line, or return this cut-out through the post to the address below. Thank you.

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