

*“Lift up your hearts.
Each new hour holds new chances
for new beginnings.”*

-Maya Angelou

What if all conflicts could

What if we resolved this way?

deed...What if? This purest of propositions, and its implications for the world around us, has led to guide us on an odyssey which began with our founding in 1983. Our mission is to create and promote more effective approaches to conflict resolution and problem solving for individuals, their families, and for individuals, institutions and organizations within the community. CMS's goal is to empower people to develop skills and learn to identify the resources needed to solve their own problems. Each program of CMS fosters self-determination and creativity in a multi-cultural community.

Today, with a staff of over sixty trained professionals and well over 100 volunteers, our holistic approach to conflict resolution touches many thousands of people each year. We're fortunate to be inspired on a daily basis by seeing the very real and positive life-altering results we achieve. But, as personally rewarding as this is, it is counterbalanced by knowing the enormity of need that still goes unaddressed. So we invite you to join us in pondering the possibilities of -- *What if?...*"

Mark Klein





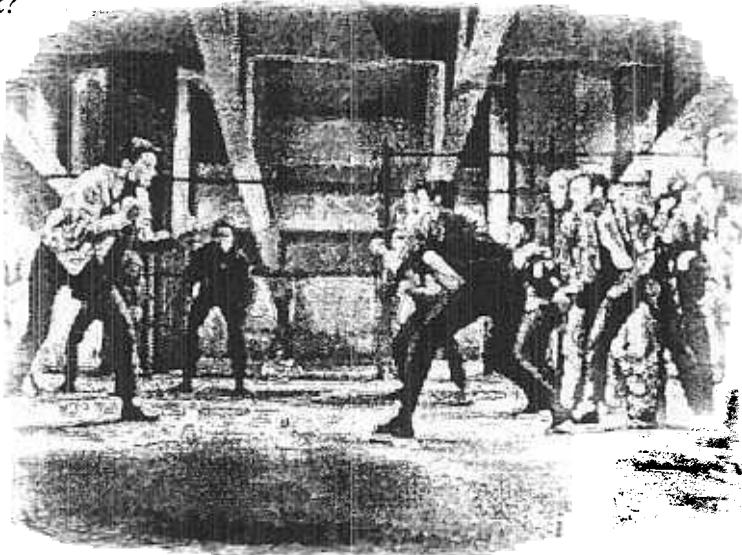
Shortly after the Civil War, along the banks of the Tug River, separating West Virginia and Kentucky, one of history's longest and bloodiest family feuds began when Randolph McCoy accused Floyd Hatfield of stealing his pig. The escalating violence that ensued over the next thirty years resulted in numerous altercations and the deaths of no less than twelve Hatfields and McCoys.



In 1804, then Vice-president Aaron Burr demanded that former Treasury Secretary Alexander Hamilton retract what he believed to be

What if they'd had a

f... Bernardo... Tony... all in the prime of their lives and now all are dead...and Chino, hauled off by police. Could the danger and tragedy of youth gang violence be more poignantly depicted than in West Side Story's urban turf rivalry of the Sharks and the Jets in 1950's New York?





*"Lizzie Borden took an axe
 And gave her mother forty whacks
 When she saw what she had done
 She gave her father forty-one!"
 ...A rhyme recited by children
 everywhere after the country
 learned of the gruesome 1892 axe
 murders of her parents in Fall
 River, Massachusetts. Though the
 trial, based mainly on
 circumstantial evidence, resulted
 in her acquittal, few, to this day,
 doubt that she was responsible for
 the dastardly deed.*

*nderous statements made
 out him. Hamilton
 used and was killed in
 a pistol duel the two men
 fought in July of that year.*

- Feb. 29, 2000 1 student killed in Mount Morris Township, Mich.*
- Dec. 6, 1999 4 students wounded in Fort Gibson, Okla.*
- Nov. 19, 1999 1 student killed in Deming, N.M.*
- May 20, 1999 6 students wounded in Conyers, Ga.*
- Apr. 28, 1999 1 student killed, 1 wounded in Alberta, Canada*
- Apr. 20, 1999 14 students, 1 teacher killed, 23 wounded in Littleton, Col.*
- June 15, 1998 1 teacher, 1 guidance counselor wounded in Richmond, Va.*
- May 21, 1998 2 students, 2 parents killed, 22 wounded in Springfield, Ore.*

mediator?

*orce, King-of-England-
 ...Widely acknowledged as
 g desirous of marrying
 her woman who might
 ously bear him a male
 Henry VIII cleared the way
 aving his current wife,
 e Boleyn, imprisoned in the
 nous Tower of London, and
 equently beheaded in 1536
 rumped-up charges of
 'tery and treason.*



if they hadn't had a mediator?

***M**r. and Mrs. C., both in their mid-forties, had been embroiled in a bitter, five-year divorce litigation that was being conducted primarily by their respective attorneys, both of whom no doubt contributed mightily to the fight-to-the-finish position and stalemate that existed. Both husband and wife decided to try mediating the dispute and attended a series of 90-minute sessions with a trained divorce mediator/attorney who helped them to focus on the issues, understand each other's feelings and, for the first time in years, communicate directly with each other. Within two months, with the animosity that had existed having been eliminated, they were able to resolve each issue and peacefully enter into a separation agreement, which formed the basis of their final divorce, and finally get on with their lives.*

***K**athy R., a sixth grader, was part of a cadre of students who had participated in one of CMS's peer mediation training programs while still in elementary school. Kathy was one of the most enthusiastic students in the group. She greatly anticipated taking her mediation skills with her when she transitioned to middle school. Unfortunately, no peer mediation program existed at her new school. Undaunted, Kathy and her fellow mediators began to informally mediate whenever they would see conflicts among students. Their work and passion began to make a difference in the lives of the students as well as in the school's environment. Eventually, the principal and the guidance counselors began to notice the impact of their work and acknowledged Kathy and her fellow mediators. The school staff, especially the guidance counselors, started seeking out the peer mediators to work with them. The school even found space for the students to use, and is now one of CMS's strongest supporters!*

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What

Sharon S., age 15, was a member of a street gang known as the Bloods. She was routinely ordered by her gang leader to beat and rob others, and in so doing, was sinking deeper and deeper into the morass of gang life. She was also a serious truant, having missed five consecutive months of school. After a probation violation, she was ordered to the Spofford Correctional Facility for several months and, upon her release, was referred to the CMS Youth Violence Intervention and Prevention Program. Since joining the program Sharon has made a complete change in her life. She no longer feels stuck in an aimless quagmire of hopelessness. Today, she has quit the gang, is doing exceedingly well in school, communicates with her family, participates in after school activities and has now even taken on a leadership role among her peers in the YVIP Program.

Roberta W., age 60, and Angela L., age 55, were neighbors who at one time were good friends, but who more recently had been arguing for years. Other neighbors had taken sides and the atmosphere on the block was that of open hostility. Insults, accusations, and shouting matches were commonplace and, after several complaints to police, the parties were referred to mediation. In addition to Roberta and Angela, nine others were in attendance, all raising their voices and talking at once. The mediator was finally able to restore order and have them focus on the issues in a respectful manner, which allowed the parties to hear and actually appreciate each others' positions for the first time in years. Both sides soon realized that their wants and needs were very much the same - the dispute was actually a misunderstanding - and their real differences were insignificant. The result was a written agreement but, more importantly, everyone hugged (and some tears flowed) as they left.

Manuel V., age 16, was a school drop out with a history of arrests for offenses ranging from drugs to car theft. Upon referral to CMS's Queens Adolescent Diversion Program, he was coupled with a 22 year-old volunteer from an area college who began to provide him with the ongoing, one-on-one support that had been so lacking in his life. Having such a positive role model take such a personal interest provided him with the impetus to work toward a GED and to continue in the program for three full semesters, changing not only his life, but that of his family as well.





A compendium of services for a

COMMUNITY ALTERNATIVES FOR FAMILIES IN CRISIS (CAFC)

CAFC is the Designated Assessment Service Unit for Queens Family Court, diverting at-risk youth who would otherwise be designated Persons In Need of Supervision (PINS). It was developed as a result of the State Legislature's passage of the PINS Adjustment Services Act (1987). This legislation was intended to decrease inappropriate use of the Family Court process and reduce out-of-home placements.

THE CMS TRAINING INSTITUTE

The Institute's mission is to provide instructional workshops and program development assistance and support to schools, public and private agencies, corporations and civic organizations in conflict resolution. It is comprised of a group of professional trainers and consultants who specialize in teaching conflict resolution, mediation, negotiation, interpersonal communication and collaborative problem-solving skills.

QUEENS FAMILY RECONCILIATION PROGRAM

This casework program is designed to work with families who have been referred from our PINS assessment unit. The four caseworkers work with the families to foster better communication and attain goals that the family feels are important to their stability and success. Individual, group and educational approaches are used to help the family work together to strengthen the positive elements of the home and address issues clearly and constructively.

BARBARA S. KLEIMAN FUND

The program is funded through donations and events to make an impact on services related to the homeless. Barbara was an assistant Commissioner at the Department of Homeless Services prior to her death. She was responsible for integrating programs into the shelter system providing opportunities for people to make changes in their lives. The Fund gives annual awards to shelter residents across the city, who have demonstrated the kind of personal transformation that makes them role models. We also honor one or two staff, who reflect the values that Barbara brought to her work.

FAMILY ASSISTANCE IN RESOLUTION (FAIR) PINS MEDIATION PROGRAM

FAIR is a program designed to help families with adolescents forge better communication and collaborative problem solving skills. With the facilitation of a FAIR Certified Mediator, the parties will attend a series of 1 - 3 mediation sessions during which they will develop their own written agreements to address their needs and concerns individually and collectively as a family. With the benefit of FAIR's mediation process, family members can learn to communicate, negotiate and peaceably live together in their own homes.

QUEENS MEDIATION NETWORK

Queens Mediation Network provides conflict resolution training and mediation services in the borough of Queens. The program's objective is to provide professional conflict resolution services in an accessible manner via a community network to the many diverse cultural neighborhoods located within the county. Examples of the types of conflict addressed include harassment, noise complaints, disagreements between neighbors, landlords and tenants, parents and children to name just a few.

QUEENS ADOLESCENT DIVERSION PROGRAM

The Queens Adolescent Diversion Program is a mentoring service which assigns college interns and community volunteers to counsel, provide guidance and support to high-risk youth on a one-on-one basis. The mentors work with the youth for 6-8 hours per week, for a period of 15 weeks. Activities include engaging in fun outings directed to improve the youth's cultural awareness and self-development, as well as helping adolescents with school, family and personal issues.

YOUTH MEDIATION CORPS

The Youth Mediation Corps is a community-based youth leadership program. The mission of YMC is to empower youth to become actively involved in the political, economic and social institutions in their communities. YMC members receive training in the areas of leadership and development, conflict resolution, mediation, community organizing and strategic planning.

erse, multi-cultural community

CMS SCHOOL-BASED MEDIATION PROGRAMS

School-based mediation programs work with schools at all levels to introduce and incorporate the concept of collaborative problem solving to students, administrators, faculty, staff and parents. These programs offer conflict resolution training and services to the entire school community in an effort to promote a more cooperative and productive learning environment.

VICTIM/OFFENDER YOUTH MEDIATION PROJECT

The concept behind Victim/Offender Mediation holds that justice does not always adequately address the needs of victims, and it does not necessarily prevent future crimes. Victims are often left with emotional damage that punishment does not alleviate, and arrests, in and of themselves, do not always speak to the reasons of why individuals commit an offense. Through victim/offender mediation, the victim has the opportunity to face the offender to review their personal issues of violation and the offender has an opportunity to offer an apology and voice an acceptance of responsibility for what happened.

DIVORCE MEDIATION PROGRAM

This program is available as a court alternative for any couple who wishes to divorce in a way that reduces the conflict, tension and emotional trauma normally associated with divorce. Specially trained mediators assist the couple in creating the terms of a separation agreement, which can later be used as the basis for their divorce.

ROCKAWAY MEDIATION SERVICES

This is a component of the PRYSE Program, a coalition that has been federally funded to set up violence prevention programming on the Rockaway Peninsula. CMS has developed a mediation site and works with the 11 partners to respond to conflict more effectively. We work with all 12 of the schools in the area to foster curricula, peer mediation programs and training for staff and parents. We provide violence prevention activities through schools and local resources.

CUSTODY/VISITATION MEDIATION PROGRAM

This program is designed to help separated or separating parents resolve disputes of custody and visitation. Mediators, who are certified in Community Mediation and have completed specialized training in Custody and Visitation Mediation, help clients direct their focus away from each other and on what is best for their children. Clients are referred directly from the Family Court, where their matters are adjourned so that they can have an opportunity to complete the mediation process. Generally, parties meet for three to five sessions, at the conclusion of which they will have an agreement of how their issues were resolved. By having a number of mediation sessions, the parties have an opportunity to try out some of their proposals and to begin to build trust and better communication.

PARENT EDUCATION AND CUSTODY EFFECTIVENESS (PEACE)

This is an educational program designed to provide information to parents about the divorce and separation process. It results in improved parent/child relationships in the reorganized family and a reduction in the number of contested custody, visitation and support disputes that face our courts. Parents who divorce or separate from each other still remain parents together. The PEACE Program's purpose is to enable parents to make responsible decisions that recognize their children's need for continuing, good relationships with them.

GENERAL PREVENTIVE SERVICES- COMMUNITY BOARD # 12

This program is funded to assist families with children who are at risk of being placed. They are referred by the Administration for Children's Services after investigating potential abuse or neglect charges and being deemed in need of case work services to address the family's needs. The program serves families in Community Board # 12. The casework model is delivered by four case workers and augmented by all the specialized youth and family services of the agency to foster problem solving within the family to attain their goals.

*“Service is the rent
you pay for your
time on earth”*

-Marian Wright Edelman

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*Community Mediation Services, Inc. is a non-profit,
501(C) (3) organization founded in 1983. The agency's
headquarters is at 89-64 163rd Street, Jamaica New York,
with satellite locations in Bayside, Flushing, Fresh Meadows
and Rockaway.*

*For more information on CMS, or to make
a tax-deductible donation or in-kind contribution,
please contact our fiscal office at 718-523-6868.*



United Way Helps Here



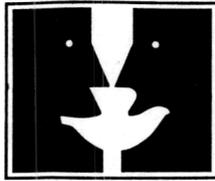


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CONFLICT
RESOLUTION CENTER
INTERNATIONAL

December 20, 2001

PAUL WAHRHAFTIG
President

Director of Community Mediation Services
Community Mediation Services
89-64 163rd St,
Jamaica NY 11432
USA

Dear Director of Community Mediation Services:

This letter is a request for your permission to post "What if?", by Mark Klein^{man}, on the new Internet website CRInfo. CRInfo, a non-profit funded by the Hewlett Foundation serves as a centralized gateway to conflict resolution oriented information.

We also would like your permission to post full text of this article at mediate.com, a website geared for the conflict resolution practitioner.

Your article has been in our library at the Conflict Resolution Center International. We want to make sure it is as widely available as possible to the field. Therefore we recommend posting the full text at these websites. We recommend posting at both so there is a better chance of long range survival for the documents in case one or the other of these sites should fail.

With your permission the full text of this article will be freely available to the public as a PDF file.

Sincerely,

PAUL WAHRHAFTIG

Please fill in and return this form and return *this letter* to the above address.

I do do not) grant permission for the above material to be posted on CRInfo.org

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By Mark Kleiman
(Signature)

Date: 12/26/01