

I believe that “a rising tide lifts all boats”. In order to fix what’s wrong in our state, we will all have to work on it. It goes back to how we work in mediation, which is empowerment of the people in front of us.

As long as we have belly-buttons, we’ve all got something in common. Mediation helps people relate to each other as human beings, dealing with human situations, regardless of who we are.

If you can facilitate two human beings to get along better, it can change society. I’ve lived it, I’ve seen it.

As a judge, I found that parties rarely have much satisfaction from the court system, which is based on a win or lose proposition. Mediation allows them to choose their own destiny and communicate with each other. They are more satisfied with the process and learn skills that will help them resolve problems in the future

There are too many cases clogging the courts which, if sent to mediation could reduce that clutter. I firmly believe that the process of mediation goes much farther in legitimating the legal system than does litigation in many cases.

Over and over again I watched children losing one of their parents because their parents didn’t have any basic conflict resolution skills. I thought, “There has got to be a better way.”

Why do we care?

The Goals, Objectives and Action Steps in this document grew out of a four-month process including a web-based questionnaire and four meetings in Nashville, Knoxville and Cookeville.

At each step we paused to ask each other this question:

WHY do we care? WHY is it important to change the way we deal with conflict in our society, using mediation and the principles on which it is based?

Here are some of those stories.

There are times a trial and a judge’s ruling is necessary, but mediation can allow parties to discuss and review the issues without making a mistake in court which might waive rights. The input of a neutral third-party, the mediator, can allow examination of alternatives not previously considered.

Everything that everybody does, good or bad, starts a chain reaction, a series of spirals that go on and on—good spirals or bad spirals. *Mediation is one of the few things that can reset the bad spirals.* That’s why I do it.

People do not have to destroy each other’s lives and drag their kids down in the process.

In mediation, people unveil to me their lives; it’s such an intimate moment; I enter this space and gently say, “Maybe I have something to offer.”

I can still remember when I first read about mediation. I was 23 years old and I thought, “These are my people.” True, it’s a career now, but every time I am present in mediation when the magic happens—and it often does—I feel honored.

I’m a preacher. Six minutes is not long enough for a preacher to tell his story. So, let’s just say “God called me to be here,” and leave it at that.

As a student my advisor said, the higher up you get in politics the less you know what you are doing, so don’t be intimidated, don’t be scared. That helped a lot.