

# The MEDLATOR



*Los Angeles City Attorney's Dispute Resolution Program*

### **Special points of interest:**

- Training Dates, 12/7, 12/9, 12/14, 12/16 and 12/21, from 8:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.
- Volunteer Appreciation Festival
- Increased Referrals / 911 Operators

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### **Improving Interview Techniques**

Please join us on Saturday, September 5, 2009, for special instruction on **Improving Interview Techniques**. The instructor for this session is Gilbert M. Escontrias, Detective III of the LAPD Mental Evaluation Unit. He is a 26 year veteran of LAPD and he has agreed to share his wealth of knowledge and expertise with us.

Please RSVP for this class by August 20, 2009, to obtain the location and parking information.

## **2009 VOLUNTEER MEDIATOR OF THE YEAR!**

On Tuesday, May 19, 2009, at the regularly scheduled meeting of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, Volunteer Mediator **Verna Smith**, was presented the **Volunteer Mediator of the Year Award** by County Board Chairman and 4<sup>th</sup> District Supervisor Don Knabe. **Verna** has volunteered with the Los Angeles City Attorney's Dispute Resolution Program a total of 2,239 hours and counting. She has helped to resolve over 100 cases, the majority of which were conducted by conciliation. **Verna** also volunteers with other County contracted agencies. Notably, she served as a facilitator in the California *Speaks* Town Hall discussion on Health Care Reform in Los Angeles. She conducts orientation sessions for new mediators. **Verna** provided

overviews of the Dispute Resolution Program to foreign delegates from China and Jordan. She designed a suggestion box to solicit recommendations from other volunteers to help improve services to members of the public. She designed and conducts "Real Talk" sessions for volunteer mediators to raise and discuss concerns. She handles a wide variety of disputes, including citations, vandalism, petty thefts, batteries and malicious mischief. **Verna** has streamlined our handling of Civil Summons cases and has developed excellent relationships with collection agencies. She has received numerous thank you cards from the community. We congratulate her!



## VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION FESTIVAL

On Saturday, June 27, 2009, from 11:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. the City of Los Angeles recognized the tremendous contributions of volunteers at City Hall.

The Festival was a resource fair with live entertainment.

The Dispute Resolution Program very much appreciates assistance provided by volunteer mediators in conducting public outreach presentations on our behalf. Many members of the public are

unaware of the tremendous services we provide. Our work throughout Los Angeles tremendously enhances what staff members are able to provide for organizations and communities throughout Los Angeles. We appreciate you and encourage you to inform us of as many opportunities as possible to get the word out about the comprehensive dispute resolution services available to individuals, businesses and organizations throughout Los Angeles. When

everyone takes responsibility for the task of informing the public. Our comprehensive services are designed to prevent and resolve problems before they escalate. Thank you!



## Dispute Resolution Training for a Diverse Population

To advance the mission of **“a mediator on every block...”** the City Attorney’s Dispute Resolution Program has scheduled the next five day, basic mediation training class for December 7, 9, 14, 16 and 21, from 8:00 a.m.- 4:00 p.m. All trainees must complete all five days of classroom training and must submit to fingerprinting and

a criminal background investigation. After the basic 40 hour classroom training is complete, volunteers are contacted by the personnel Unit of the Office of the City Attorney to determine eligibility to report for service. The most important factor in eligibility is ensuring that the complete volunteer application is

comprehensive and truthful. A unique component of the City Attorney’s Dispute Resolution Program is the requirement to complete 160 hours of supervised case handling in order to receive a Certificate of Completion signed by Carmen Trutanich.

## Increased referrals from 911-Operators

The telephone operators who accept 911 Emergency calls from members of the public have requested roll call presentations from the Dispute Resolution Program. Avis Ridley-Thomas, Program Director and Susan Strick, Deputy City Attorney provided the initial presentations to this important group, for the 6:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. shifts. As you are aware, 911 is a 24 hour operation.

We anticipate that more presentations will be requested for other work shifts. We will ask that volunteers assist in responding to these requests. In advance of our mission of **“a mediator on every block...”** we expect to constantly conduct outreach presentations. Our volunteer mediators are a wonderful source of support for these efforts.

Please anticipate that members of the staff of the Dispute Resolution Program will call on you to assist in conducting Overview Presentations to 911 operators. We very much appreciate your willingness to help!

## Meet and Greet Carmen Trutanich

On Saturday, July 11th the newly elected City Attorney, Carmen "Nuch" Trutanich, hosted a Meet and Greet for all City Attorney staff members and volunteers at the Department of Water and Power Headquarters on Hope and Grand Avenues.

Hundreds of veteran City Attorney staff members and volunteer mediators took the opportunity to interact with "Nuch" and his senior staff. He provided an overview of his mission and encouraged interaction among everyone in the office to make it a more productive and transparent work environment to better benefit residents of Los Angeles. In a striking departure from past practice, "Nuch" referenced his open door policy, encouraging everyone with ideas to challenge him and others to consider what we can do to make the Office of the Los Angeles City Attorney the premier law office in the nation.

Mediator Maurice Cheese' asked "Nuch" how he expected to use the Dispute Resolution Program in his new mission for the office. "Nuch" stated "We are going to expand it." Stay tuned for more details about how this initiative is expected to play out for the mediators of the Dispute Resolution Program.

### Our Sincere Thanks!

**Kay Brown, Annette Segil, Mitzi Morrow and Jackie Holly** each presented an overview of the

Dispute Resolution Program to LAPD Supervisors and members of Neighborhood Councils.

A facilitated dialogue on "Sustaining Quality Service to Consumers During and After the Budget Crisis" by **Kay Brown, Cian Mitsunaga, Larry Dozier, Erma Dozier, Ed Young, Margie Mosley, Laska Mims, Brian Johnson, Maryanne Pier-son, Donna Williams, Florence Avognon, Virginia Cottrell Thomas, Helen Winston, N. Sue Thompson and Jackie Holly.**

A community dialogue on problems related to a Recycling Center located in the 10th Council District was effectively handled by **Phillip Thomas.**

**Mel Flack**, a long term mediator, provided an overview of DRP services at an LAPD Foothill Division Supervisors Meeting.

**KimMarie Johnson-Roussell**, conducted an overview at a Community Meeting organized by LAPD. The entire session was conducted in Spanish for members of our community surrounding the San Rafael Church.

**Jay Figueroa** helped neighbors resolve a tree trimming dispute between neighbors, which one neighbor had believed presented a safety hazard.

**Verna Smith**, assisted a consumer and a major bank to resolve a debt repayment dispute.

**Jo-Ann Krohn** assisted neighbors in reaching a resolution ensuring that no debris would be deposited on one another's property and that they would jointly investigate covering a common fence.

**Verna Smith** effectively assisted neighbors in resolving problems involving smoke, noise, parking and respect.

**Eric Forster** effectively intervened and helped resolve a matter involving poorly fitting dentures.

**Stan Malin** obtained a satisfactory agreement between a consumer and bank on a credit card debt.

**N. Sue Thompson** effectively intervened and obtained a resolution to a long simmering landlord tenant dispute.

Recording and court fees were discharged after intervention by **Hali Paul** in a court related case.

A problem tree was the cause of a dispute between property owners which was brought to resolution through the efforts of **Jo-Ann Krohn.**

Several financial service firms and major banks, which have filed civil suites against consumers, were able to obtain satisfactory resolutions due to efforts of Volunteer Mediator of the Year **Verna Smith**, who specializes in handing court summons cases for the Dispute Resolution Program.

### Dispute Resolution Program Contact Information

222 S. Hill Street, Suite 600

Los Angeles, CA 90012

213/485-8324 voice

213/485-8565 fax

TDD/TTY (213) 485-0757

E-mail: [mediate@lacity.org](mailto:mediate@lacity.org)

Web: [www.lacity.org/mediate](http://www.lacity.org/mediate)

**San Fernando Valley Office**

(818) 756-9601 voice

(818) 342-0738 fax

**WLA Office**

(310) 479-3090 voice

(310) 479-2853 fax

*"These Services Are Made Possible Through Major Support From the Los Angeles County Department of Community and Senior Services through the California Dispute Resolution Programs Act."*



Office of the Los Angeles City Attorney  
CARMEN A. TRUTANICH  
DISPUTE RESOLUTION PROGRAM  
222 So. Hill Street, 6th Floor  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

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