



Courier Post Article profiling Ray and his practice

Mediator helps resolve disputes peacefully

By **TERESA ANICOLA**
Courier-Post Staff



Ray Blume

Occupation: Family therapist/mediator

Residence: Voorhees

Insights: "If you work with schools, and families teaching conflict resolution, it makes a big enough impact to decrease violence."

Ray Blume is a man with a mission.

A family therapist and mediator at the Family Mediation and Counseling Center in Gibbsboro, he devotes much of his time to teaching others conflict resolution through mediation.

"People have to be informed there are alternative dispute resolution options besides litigation," said Blume.

A therapist since 1995, he is a certified member of the New Jersey Association of Professional Mediators. He earned his master's degree at LaSalle University.

Blume has devoted most of his life to helping others through crisis intervention. He learned some of these skills through volunteering with community organizations such as Jewish Family and Children's Service, and Special Friend, an organization similar to Big Brothers. He also founded and ran a support group for men called Bachelor Fathers during the 1990s.

Through the years, Blume saw a constant pattern: People do not know how to deal properly with conflict to resolve problems.

"It's one of the primary skills people need to learn to manage life effectively," he says. "People face it (conflict) every day."

Blume, along with his wife, Robin, an attorney at the center, performs co-mediation in divorce cases, civil issues, municipal court cases, and neighborhood disputes.

"It's a way to resolve conflicts without overburdening the court system," he says. "We help people to assume responsibility and become more empowered. They end up making decisions with a future focus about where they are headed."

"In divorce cases, especially when children are involved, we get them away from focusing on the past and to work on what's best for the children. We help them redefine their roles from husband and wife to co-parents."

Although Blume feels the court system has made some advances in mediation, he thinks more people need to be aware it is an option early in the litigation process. And he has been trying to take his message of peaceful conflict resolution to other arenas. He has been teaching children at elementary schools and will be speaking this year to fourth- and fifth-graders at Voorhees Middle School.

"At that age," he says, "(children) are developmentally at a place to understand. You want children to try dealing with conflicts by feeling safe enough to talk about it. It starts at home, where kids learn from their families how to deal with conflict."

"By going into schools and teaching this, it can be a way to stop school violence. I think it can make a difference."

Although fees for his services vary depending on the case, the cost for divorce mediation involving him and his attorney wife is \$175 per hour.

"We help people who are in these conflicts to take responsibility for their own actions," he explains, "and not dump it on the court system."

If you have a job you would like to see profiled, write to Teresa Anicola, Courier-Post, Box 5300, Cherry Hill 08034. Fax: 663-2831.

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*Please Note:

Since the publication of this article, rates for services provided by Ray and the staff of the Family Mediation and Counseling Center have increased. Hence, rates cited above article are no longer valid. Kindly contact us by phone, traditional mail (or email) and we will provide current pricing for any services desired. Thanks you!

We promise a timely response to any and all of your questions or concerns.

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