

Life on the hill

BRYAN COUNTY NEWS

PAGE 7B • THURSDAY, OCTOBER 26, 2017 • WWW.BRYANCOUNTYNEWS.COM

Locals help others through mediation

Center uses mediators to avoid courtroom

By Evelyn Fallon
Bryan County News

Born in Philadelphia, Ron Sattelle made his way to Georgia in 1953. Years later he would move to Cleveland, Ga., where he attended school and met his wife, Gerry. They returned to the Atlanta area in 1967 where Ron would transition from engineering to commercial real estate. After retirement from real estate, Sattelle coached women's basketball at Oglethorpe University in Atlanta for 10 years. Twenty-three years ago, they purchased a home in Kilkenny. It was the perfect location as they love to sail and share time with their four children and 10 grandchildren.

The Sattelle family has been in Bryan County permanently for six years. Their passion for the water led them to The Dolphin Project, a nonprofit all-volunteer organization. Through this, Sattelle heard of the Mediation Center of Savannah. His interest was sparked and his desire to help others led to serving as a mediator.

Another Bryan County resident, Frank Perillo, also discovered the Mediation Center and felt that same

desire to help. A former attorney, Perillo practiced corporate law in the Boston area for 35 years. Perillo and wife, Silver Moon, looked to move after retirement and fell in love with the area.

They made Richmond Hill home 11 years ago. After discovering the Mediation Center, Perillo knows it was the right fit for him after retirement. He admits he has an analytical mind and enjoys being able to help others solve problems, it is a win-win.

Despite diverse backgrounds, the two have found a way to use their previous life experiences to help others through mediation. With Sattelle mediating domestic cases and Perillo mediating civil cases, both feel strongly they can make a difference with the support of the Mediation Center of Savannah staff.

"There will always be a split, no one goes away completely happy," Perillo said. "Those who come in will eventually settle as they do not want to go to court. In court, you roll the dice more as there is no way to structure an outcome."

Both shed light on the reality that each mediator is different and has a different approach to getting the conflicts resolved. Through the training and assistance of the staff at the Mediation Center, mediators are fully supported when handling cases.

"Unlike court cases, me-

diation is confidential and scheduled at the convenience of the parties involved," said Jill Cheeks, Mediation Center of Savannah executive director. "Parties also maintain control of the solution, including the nature and scope of their agreements. Mediation can work for all involved. It's an opportunity to save time, money, and possibly even a relationship."

"Over the last 20 years, the Mediation Center has trained over 180 volunteer mediators, conducted over 10,000 mediations and facilitated nearly 7,000 settlements," she continued. "Our mission is to provide and promote within the community methods other than litigation for settling disputes. The dispute resolution shall be confidential, inexpensive, prompt and readily accessible to everyone."

Despite the centers association with Chatham County courts, those in Bryan County can still play a role as Sattelle and Perillo do. The Mediation Center is 31 years old and serves all of the Coastal Empire, including Bryan, Effingham, Liberty, Tattnall and Bulloch counties.

October is Conflict



Photo provided

Bryan County residents Frank Perillo and wife Silver Moon, moved from the Boston area 11 years ago.

Resolution Month, the center and volunteers, just like Sattelle and Perillo, have played their parts in continuing the efforts to resolve conflicts out of court and will do so for years to come.

To assist in mediation, one can attend a monthly "Mediation Matters" informational meeting. Moving forward, all is made simple through the center's willingness to educate and train those looking to get involved. Anyone interested in becoming a mediator can review the GODR website at <http://godr.org>, and email a statement of interest to the Mediation Center of Savannah, info@mediationsavannah.com.

"There is a certain satisfaction that comes with helping the community and

people in distress. I have been lucky in my life with great relationships and help along the way. If I can help someone else, I am glad to do it if possible," said Sattelle.

"There is great finality in the agreements that we reach. If they both sign off, this is the finality of it for them. Once they leave the property, it is resolved. If you come to a legal binding agreement, that feeling they get that the dispute is over, and it is freeing to see the process come to an end. The weight comes off their backs and those in conflict are finally able to move on," said Perillo.

For more information on the Mediation Center of Savannah, visit mediation-savannah.com.



Photo provided

Ron Sattelle discovered serving as a mediator and has been involved with the Mediation Center of Savannah for six years.

Life on the hill || Q&A WITH DIRECTOR OF MEDIATION CENTER



Jill Cheeks, executive director of Mediation Center of Savannah

Q: Name & current job title?

A: Jill Cheeks, Executive Director

Q: What roles do you play within the Mediation Center?

A: The most important role is delivering our mission and ensuring the coastal community is aware of this valuable local asset. Conflict management is a critical component of community health and we have the resources to help organizations, companies and individuals.

Q: How have you seen mediation impact the lives of those coming in seeking to settle disputes outside of court?

A: Having a voice or a say in how the disagreement will be solved is very powerful – research shows agreements are twice as likely to be adhered to as court ordered decisions. The neutral third-party facilitator (mediator) allows the parties to be heard. People in conflict often have a significant weight on their shoulders and their lives are being deeply impacted by the dispute. Mediation provides an opportunity to find closure and define a better path forward.

Q: What should people do if they are interested in playing a role in mediation?

A: Come to one of our monthly Mediation Matters information sessions at our offices in Midtown Savannah.

Q: What programs are available for those looking to train to become mediators?

A: We provide general civil and domestic mediator trainings to become a registered neutral in the state of Georgia. This professional registration allows you to volunteer at the Mediation Center.

Q: What plans are in place for the future of the Mediation Center and how can we, as a community, get involved?

A: The Mediation Center looks to continue to expand its current programs to serve a broader area of the community. In addition, we look to partner with other nonprofits, the city and the county to develop new programs to help the areas youth develop skills to handle conflict in a more peaceful and effective manner.