

Mediation program returns to make a difference in Fallsburg

By Pauline Liu

Times Herald-Record

@PaulineLiu845

Posted Jul 21, 2017 at 8:32 PM

Updated Jul 21, 2017 at 9:47 PM

FALLSBURG — Fallsburg Justice Court clipped through 44 cases in 90 minutes Tuesday night, less than half what it used to take.

How?

According to Town Judge Amanda Ward, there's a new order in the courtroom thanks to the return of a mediation program offered through the Dispute Resolution Center.

"It helps to streamline the court calendar and the system," Ward said.

Daniel McCormack is one of the 10 trained mediators who volunteer their services a few days each week in courthouses throughout the region. Mediation can be effective in civil court cases such as landlord-tenant disputes, business or neighbor disputes and small claims cases, according to McCormack. They also mediate in family court on issues including divorce, child custody and parent-child disputes.

The mediation program was brought back to Fallsburg two months ago, after a dozen-year hiatus. How it came about was serendipity.

"Dan and I go to the same church in Monticello, so one Sunday he asked me if I was interested in the program," Ward said.

Court clerks Tracey Leszczynski and Courtney Raven said the change has been dramatic.

"When two people come to court in a civil dispute, there's a lot of anger, and mediation helps to peel away the personal issues behind the civil case," Leszczynski said.

In one case, a defendant came to court and didn't understand why he was being sued.

Both plaintiff and defendant sat down with McCormack.

"So instead of taking 25 minutes in open court having the case explained to him, he went through mediation and now he already knows that he wants to go to trial," Ward said.

"Every single one of our mediators has a deep appreciation for giving back to their

communities through conflict resolution,” said regional coordinator Jolynn Dunn. “Our mediators will even go to the office, if you don’t want to go to court.”

In Sullivan County, mediation is also offered at Mamakating Town Court, Monticello Village Court and Thompson Town Court.

Mediators are required to undergo 32 hours of training and an apprenticeship that lasts three to six months.

Dunn said she’s always looking for more mediators. The next training will be held in September. Anyone interested in registering for mediator training can call the DRC at 794-3377.

READ NEXT

Google Street View's latest destination: the International Space Station

Posted Jul 23 at 12:01 AM

5 singers who turned out to be great actors

Posted Jul 23 at 12:01 AM

This couple's themed collection is so huge they bought a second house to hold it

Posted Jul 22 at 3:00 PM

Woman goes to hospital to birth quintuplets, but doctors reveal she was never actually pregnant

Posted Jul 22 at 12:30 PM

Virtual reality helps doctors separate conjoined twin joined at the heart [video]

Posted Jul 21 at 3:30 P