



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Harford County Launches “Peaceful Alternatives” Program for School Communities

BEL AIR, Md., (April 9, 2018) - Promoting peaceful solutions to conflict in school communities, Harford County Community Services has partnered with Harford County Public Schools to launch Peaceful Alternatives, a free program available in elementary through high school. The program supports a positive and safe learning environment through conflict resolution workshops, attendance mediation for families, and mediations for students, parents and staff.

The inaugural Peaceful Alternatives conflict resolution workshops were held recently for fourth graders at Hall’s Cross Roads Elementary School in Aberdeen. Seventy-two students graduated from the workshops that offered role-play activities and listening exercises during classes held in school for an hour once a week for three months. The students learned problem-solving skills and practiced techniques that promote student accountability, strengthen relationships, and encourage collaboration. In post-workshop surveys, a majority of the students said they discovered new ways to relate to each other.

One fourth-grader wrote, “I like how mediation helped me control my anger and work better with the kids in my class.”

Harford County Public Schools plans to expand the Peaceful Alternatives conflict resolution workshops to other selected schools in the 2018-19 school year.

In addition, Peaceful Alternatives offers attendance mediation and school mediation services upon request by any school community member. All mediations are held in a confidential setting, led by a neutral mediator trained by Harford County Community Services’ Mediation Program.

Attendance mediation helps parents and teachers identify underlying issues that contribute to absenteeism and tardiness, and then develop a plan to improve attendance. The program fosters communication between the family and the school, and connects children at risk for truancy to available resources.

School mediation services bring students, teachers, and parents, together to resolve conflicts collaboratively, resulting in an agreement that is acceptable to all stakeholders. Mediations are free and voluntary, and can involve students, parents and/or teachers.

To request an attendance or school mediation, please contact the Mediation Program at 410-638-4807 or sefisher@harfordcountymd.gov


“I would like to thank Harford County Public Schools for partnering with my administration on this important program,” County Executive Barry Glassman said. “Our shared goal is to help school community members de-escalate conflict, mend relationships and enhance school safety, now and for future generations.”

Harford County Community Services’ Mediation Program also offers free community-based recovery and re-entry mediation, and community conferencing. Mediation offers a viable alternative to court, which can be costly, time-consuming, and often fails to resolve the factors contributing to the conflict. Mediation helps individuals resolve their conflicts in a safe setting, allowing participants to disclose information freely, without fear of judgment. For more information, contact Susan E. Fisher, Manager of the Human Relations and Mediation Office at 410-638-4739 or sefisher@harfordcountymd.gov or visit www.harfordmediation.org.



Photo caption: Fourth graders study conflict resolution at Hall’s Cross Roads Elementary School in Aberdeen.

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