In an effort to encourage team spirit and camaraderie amongst the volunteer mediators, the Community Mediation Centre (CMC) held its Mediators’ Retreat on 9 May 2015 at Suntec Singapore Convention and Exhibition Centre.

To ensure that the activities were meaningful to the mediators, the CMC involved some mediators during the planning stage of the retreat where some of their suggestions were incorporated into the programme for the event. Associate Professor Ho Peng Kee, Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Community Mediation, was invited to join the mediators at the event where the CMC staff, who organised the event, also acted as facilitators to guide them through the activities. Not only did the activities provide learning points, it brought fun and laughter to all present.

After the opening address by the Director of Community Mediation and Ministry of Law Services Centre, Elsie, and an ice-breaker activity, the mediators were split into five teams for Mercury Rising, a debate-style activity that required them to flex their wits and reasoning abilities. The engaging session required participants to present their viewpoints to the judges - Assoc Prof Ho, Principal Master Mediator Dr Lim Lan Yuan, and Elsie - based on a given topic. With no right or wrong, this activity was conceived to help them appreciate divergent perspectives; a concept significant to their role as mediators who seek to bridge the differences between people by facilitating discussions to resolve disagreements.
Subsequent to lunch, the mediators regrouped for Piecing Peace. Like piecing jigsaw puzzles, this activity saw the teams putting together fragmented pieces of an original picture which was shown to them. The activity highlighted how our mediators often have to gather scattered information shared by disputing parties, make sense of it by uncovering underlying issues and guiding the parties to look at things from a broader perspective so as to generate possible solutions to resolve their conflicts.

The retreat ended with Heart and Soul, where the mediators’ hands got dirty - for a special reason - to create art pieces to commemorate the day. The mediators were asked to cover their palms with paint and leave imprints on canvases. This activity was meant to symbolise how our mediators from all walks of life can come together to make a difference, and how they all have a hand in (pun intended) promoting harmony. Indeed, as the name of the activity implies, they are the heart and soul of the CMC; these art pieces will be hung on the walls of the mediation rooms to remind the mediators of the special bond they share.

“The programme was well-planned. The activities conducted were engaging and it motivated the participants to contribute.”
~ Mr Mohamed Feroz

“The event created a good opportunity for us to interact with fellow mediators, especially through the games which required teamwork.”
~ Mr P. Thirunal Karasu
Mr Poh Tiong Bee, a veteran mediator for 17 years, represented the CMC at the annual Chinese New Year Reception hosted by the Prime Minister and his Cabinet Colleagues on 16 March 2015. He was nominated to attend the event as a form of recognition for his efforts.

The 74-year-old is a pioneer volunteer whose dedication and consistent performance have earned him long-service awards and the title of Master Mediator in 2002.

Besides meeting the hosts, the night’s event at the Istana also provided a good platform for fellow volunteers from various agencies to network with one another.
MEDIATION – More than just a means to an end

by Dr Lim Lan Yuan

For mediators, their goal is to utilise mediation to help disputing parties resolve their conflicts amicably, which means helping them reach a settlement for their conflict. Having said that, a full resolution is not always achievable. Despite a mediator’s best efforts, conflicts cannot be resolved if one or both parties are unable or unwilling to compromise.

Nevertheless, going through mediation provides parties an opportunity to communicate and improve their relationship. Whether or not the dispute is resolved through mediation, it increases the chance of resolving the conflict they are facing thereafter.

When conflicts occur and emotions escalate, one may find it difficult to listen and acknowledge the other party’s point of view. The common reactions are finger pointing, blame placing, disregarding what the other person has to say, or worse, the refusal to engage.

In this instance, mediation helps by opening the channel of communication for disputing parties to speak their mind and be listened to. Sometimes, that is all that people need to feel better. By bringing them together, it also provides an opportunity for them to look at the problem through different lenses.

Thereafter, they may be more willing to adjust and reconsider their personal stand. An open conversation will also help them to uncover hidden issues and increase awareness of each others’ positions, as well as appreciate the differences in views, which could guide them to generate options and make feasible suggestions towards the resolution of their conflicts.

Since most conflicts develop within a larger emotional context characterised by feelings of betrayal, disrespect and abuse, it is only when these feelings are expressed, heard and most importantly understood that healing can start.

Mediation can mend fraying relationships by fostering mutual respect between the parties. It can aid in the reduction of anxiety and other negative by-products of the conflict such as hostility, hard feelings and resentment. It can also engender moral growth and even inspire forgiveness.

Mediation opens up the full dimension of the conflict which allows parties to realise it is not merely about “who is wrong” and “who is right”. By reframing conflicts as mutual problems, parties are more inclined to work through their differences together to eventually find their own solution that is ‘win-win’ for both. When they are able to do so, the relationships that they share with each other can be preserved, even after the conflict.
shhhh

CASE-IN-COMIC

The comic below depicts a dispute between two people that can be resolved with the use of mediation.

1. Kenny wanted to study but was distracted by the noise next door.

2. Mr Tan! Can you control your kids? They are making too much noise!

3. ...and the noise became worse! They are really inconsiderate!

4. No, that's not the case!

5. I've tried my best to control my kids and told them not to make so much noise! We don't want to disturb our neighbours.

6. Shhh!

During mediation, both parties had a chance to share their thoughts and feelings with each other. The mediator also emphasised the importance of communication to them.

They exchanged numbers and agreed to communicate with each other if they face a similar situation in future.

Kenny and the mediator

mediator

mediator

success

SUCCESSFUL

MEDIATION

win-win

Want to win $30 worth of FairPrice vouchers?

We will be giving the vouchers to three lucky winners who can answer these questions correctly! (Hint: All the answers can be found in this issue.)

Email your answers with the subject title “CMC Quiz 2015 Issue 3” to: cmc.quiz@gmail.com

Each person is only allowed to win this contest once. Contest closes on 21 Sep 2015 and winners will be contacted.

1. Name the activity at the retreat where mediators created art pieces to commemorate the day.
   a) Heart and Hand
   b) Heart and Mind
   c) Heart and Soul

2. Mediation will provide disputing parties with an opportunity to _________.
   a) place the blame on one another
   b) disregard what each party has to say
   c) communicate and improve their relationship

Congratulations to last issue’s quiz winners*!

Ms Janice Seah, Rivervale Community Centre
Mr Jimmy BG Teo, CMC Mediator
Mdm A.S.H. Rujia, Grassroots Leader

*These winners have been contacted separately.