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## National conflict resolution group offers workshop

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**May 4, 2005**

DEL MAR – If the thought of confrontation conjures images of cartoon characters with bright red faces and smoke billowing out their ears, it might be time to enroll in a conflict-resolution class.

The National Conflict Resolution Center will hold a four-day Introductory Mediation Skills workshop tomorrow, Friday and May 12-13 in Carlsbad.

The 32-hour course will address family and workplace issues as well as consumer quarrels. It's designed to show participants how to seek creative and collaborative solutions to arguments and disputes.

Students will learn mediation techniques through a combination of lectures, simulations and exercises. The curriculum includes conflict theory, balancing power, handling emotions, drafting agreements and mediator ethics.

"People will leave the workshop with better listening and communication skills," said Eric Sandy, a Del Mar resident and member of the board of directors at the resolution center, which is based in San Diego. "They will be able to better deal with difficult people and have the ability to understand and cope with different points of view."

Sandy, who will serve as a coach and assistant during the workshop, took the training nine years ago.

He refers to the course as "mediation boot camp."

"The class gave me a tremendous background and whetted my appetite," Sandy said. "The more you get into it, the more you realize what a helpful tool it is to be able to look at a conflict and dispute through the eyes of a neutral (person)."

Since taking the class, he has volunteered with small claims court and mentors University of San Diego law students.

Sandy is a hearing officer for the San Diego Housing Authority and San Diego County Department of Public Works, and he sits on the resolution center's panel for cases referred from Superior Court.

One of the biggest mistakes people make when conversing with others is that they "reload" instead of "reply," he said.

"Instead of listening carefully to what the other person has to say, we are already designing our reply and our comeback and our answer," he explained, which leads to poor communication.

Participants in the class come from a wide variety of professions, including business, law, education and human resources. People also attend for personal reasons, such as learning how to become a better listener and maintain an open mind.

"People come in to learn how to approach difficult topics and de-escalate strong emotions," said Barbara Filner, director of the center's Training Institute. "This is a way to help people look at what they really want and need as opposed to what they think they're entitled to."

The goal of the workshop is to understand that although conflict may be inevitable, it is manageable, Filner said. She will lead the workshop with Sandy and fellow Del Mar resident Laura Kass-Moreno.

"Conflict is not a bad thing," Filner said. "It can be a very helpful indicator that something needs to be talked about."


The workshop costs \$950. Registration is available online at [www.ncrconline.com](http://www.ncrconline.com) or by calling (619) 238-2400.

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