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A United Way Agency

WASH. CO. COMMUNITY MEDIATION CTR SEEKS VOLUNTEERS FOR JUNE 2009 MEDIATION TRAINING

By: Pat Miller & Dave Bort,
WCCMC Board Members

President Obama has urged all Americans to serve their country by becoming involved in volunteer work. Here's your chance. The Washington County Community Mediation Center (WCCMC) is offering a free training course for future mediators. Imagine the satisfaction in helping members of your community resolve their conflicts peacefully. WCCMC mediators practice, promote, and teach mediation, a non-adversarial conflict management approach that helps to rebuild relationships in a safe and secure environment, thereby promoting a peaceful community. Consider joining WCCMC in its mission to provide non-judgmental, confidential, and free mediation

services for all citizens of Washington County.

Mediation training is provided at no charge to participants, and requires a commitment to complete the entire 50 hours of basic mediation training. The training format is very dynamic and includes extensive use of role plays, exercises, and simulations. Each participant will have an opportunity to practice mediation skills and to be observed multiple times, with helpful feedback provided by trained mediators. Once trained, mediators will help neighbors, families, couples, and co-workers in Washington County peacefully resolve their own conflicts.

In return, volunteers must agree to work at least 100 hours to support WCCMC and its programs, upon completion of their training. The

training meets the requirements of Maryland Rule 17-106 for court appointed mediators, and volunteer hours from students, after the completion of training, may be applied to student service learning credits toward graduation. WCCMC is now accepting applications for individuals interested in attending the training, fulfilling the 100-hour volunteer commitment, and serving their community and country. Individuals age 13 and older are encouraged to apply.

Those who commit to the training will attend a mandatory orientation on Monday, May 25th, from 6:00 - 8:30 PM at the WCCMC office location of 101 Summit Avenue, Hagerstown, MD.

(SEE 2009 MEDIATION TRAINING page 6)

STORIES FROM THE MEDIATION TABLE, PART I

By: Thom Davis,
WCCMC Board Member

For those of us who have shared in the mediation experience, there seems to be an almost infinite reservoir of deeply moving and memorable moments. One of the cases that stuck in my mind coupled the transformative power of mediation and the profound effect of fatherhood.

A court ordered case, it involved a teenage girl who had called the police when her father had alleg-

edly pushed her mother in a state of drunkenness. The girl was a lanky, amply pierced, seriously slouching, pissed off teenager, heavily into the defensive silent mode all too familiar to those of us who have worked with or parented teenagers. "Don't mess with me, don't talk to me, I do not want to be here", were sentiments clearly signaled. The dad was a rough and tumble kind of guy, 8th grade education, not at all comfortable talking in general, let alone with strangers.

The issue initially turned around the father's drinking. For him, the father, it was stress relief from a relentless and thankless job from which he had never called in sick, and put in every overtime hour possible to keep his family solvent.

To the daughter, it was a Dad who was never there either physically or emotionally.

(SEE STORY page 6)

By: Billy Bundesen,
AmeriCorps State Volunteer

WCCMC's AmeriCorps staff has been busy presenting and working with a variety of organizations across the county, including: (1) many funeral homes (who inevitably deal with conflict ranging from property disputes to personality conflicts between family members who never speak unless responding to a death in the family), (2) local nonprofits and organizations who work with the low-income community, including the ARC, San Mar Children's Home and the Adult Care staff at the Department of Social Services (DSS), (3) county schools (continuing an effort that previous AmeriCorps member Ryan Trout worked hard on developing - over time, we hope to develop a strong partnership with every middle and high school in the county), focusing on their Student Support Teams (which typically consist of counselors, nurses, vice-principals and other staff who work collaboratively to assist troubled youth at their schools), (4) police departments (PDs), including a Ride-Along program fostered by Chief Buskirk of the Hancock PD, and (5) the faith-based community, including connecting with Henry Bible of Deaf Net and Women of Valor, partici-

pating in the Convoy of Hope, signing MOUs with ACTS 9 (a Seventh Day Adventist food pantry and relief agency), and with Bethel UCC (near Smithsburg) - note that all but one food pantry in the county are run by churches, and that, so far, all but three have agreed to distribute WCCMC information sheets with their food bags; bus drivers at Emmanuel Baptist Temple (near Huyetts) have also agreed to distribute WCCMC materials. Some contacted groups were not only interested in referring their clientele to WCCMC, but also asked about Conflict Resolution Training that WCCMC could provide for their staff. Another improvement was realized by responding to feedback received from numerous police officers - a new referral slip was developed for the officers to take with them on patrol; if an officer is speaking to someone who shows an interest in mediation, they can write their contact information on the slip, and simply drop it in the department's WCCMC mail box, which is checked weekly. We hope and expect that increasing our referral networks, and implementing the new direct-referral approach for use by police, will bring more conflicts to the mediation table!

Schedule of Events

Contact WCCMC for more information on all scheduled events

January 22-23 Police Academy Conflict Resolution Training

March 5—Development Committee Mtg

March 19—Board Meeting

March 19—Equal Opportunity Office Conference at Dutch's Daughter in Frederick

March 21—5 Hour Follow Up Training

April 2—Development Committee Mtg

April 3—HPD In-service Training

April 6—HPD In-service Training

April 10—HPD In-service Training

April 13—HPD In-service Training

April 16—Board Meeting

May 7—Presentation to Boonsboro Middle School PTSA

May 7—Development Committee Meeting

May 9—Volunteer Appreciation Event

May 21—Board Meeting

May 25—Mediation Training Orientation

May 29—MCTC Conflict Resolution Training

June 6—Mediation Training

June 7—Mediation Training

June 13—Mediation Training

June 14—Mediation Training

June 27—Mediation Training

HUNDREDS GATHER FOR MEDIATION CONVENTION

By: Patricia McConnell,
WCCMC Volunteer

The Maryland Mediators Convention is an event held every other year in which mediators from all over the state come to learn new techniques, discuss old concepts, and network. The level of experience of the crowd ranged from those fresh out of training, to mediators in private practice and beyond.

On December 5th of last year, over 300 attendees and 75 presenters packed into the auditorium at the Maritime Institute Conference Center in Linthicum. That's a lot of registration processing, biographical sketch gathering, lunch preparing, not to mention Xeroxing and collating! The convention planners did a wonderful job of organizing everything and getting us where we needed to go, when we needed to get

there. Some of the groups that sponsored the event were out in numbers as well, and participated as exhibitors to share information about their organizations.

The plenary gathering on training, first on the agenda, was entertaining as a bit of theatre, a segment of King Lear, was performed by the Frederick Shakespeare Theatre. The audience had an opportunity

(SEE CONVENTION page 6)

OFF THE BOARD!

By: Patricia Miller,
WCCMC Board Member

From early childhood, my life has been about animals. I wanted to be a veterinarian, but I was dissuaded by organic chemistry. I detoured to a 20+-year career in animal protection in California, returned to college to earn a degree in Business Administration, then launched my dog training and writing career as Peaceable Paws LLC.

What, you might ask, does this have to do with being on the Board of the WCCMC? There's more conflict than you might imagine in the animal world. I experienced conflict daily, working as a humane officer in Marin County (California) for ten years. We even made use of County Mediation Services to resolve animal-related disputes. The next ten years as Director of Operations at the Marin Humane Society taught me about management of non-profit organizations

and the importance of Boards – from the staff perspective. I then served on the Board of the Santa Cruz SPCA, and later, Friends of Chattanooga Animal Services, experiencing first-hand the Board side of non-profit work.

“I enjoyed a presentation by WCCMC staff to the Hagerstown Rotary ... when they concluded their talk with an appeal for Board members, I was hooked.”

Fast forward to Hagerstown. Still immersed in animal work, I enjoyed a presentation by WCCMC staff to the Hagerstown Rotary, where I am a member. I was impressed with their commitment and their professionalism. When they con-

cluded their talk with an appeal for Board members, I was hooked. Here was an opportunity to apply my background and experience in a new field – to serve my community while stepping outside my comfort zone, doing something that didn't involve fur and teeth.

Particularly because WCCMC is a young organization, I felt my skills could be put to good use in a place where I could really help to make a difference. I recognize that the primary responsibilities of a Board are to set policy and ensure the financial health and stability of the organization. Therefore, now as Chair of the Development Committee, I am focusing my Board energy on fund raising and organizational development, to ensure we have the resources and community support we need to continue our important work.

Want to help? If you believe in the mission of WCCMC, move it to the top of your charitable giving list and write a check today, large or small. Put your money where your support is. Every dollar helps.



By: Linda Jones,
WCCMC Case Manager

Robin Handler has been selected as our Volunteer of the Winter Quarter. Robin has served the WCCMC for numerous years, always presenting a sweet spirit and willingness to serve our organization. Her experience as an educator with the Washington County Public Schools has provided a solid base to help her mediate with a wide range of participants. Robin, a

MEDIATOR SPOTLIGHT: ROBIN HANDLER

former principal of Smithsburg Elementary School, now works as a school guidance counselor at South Hagerstown High School. Robin has continued to study the mediation process by taking additional training beyond the Basic certification, such as Large Group, Parent/Teen and Divorce. It has been this broad base of training and acquisition of skills that make Robin such a strong and seasoned mediator.

Upon completion of last year's March training for new volunteer mediators, Robin co-mediated numerous cases so that the new trainees could observe their required 2 observations. She

worked on State's Attorney's cases, primarily Second Degree Assault, as well as School Plans for the biological children of young, divorced parents. Robin has also received training to handle Separation and Co-Parenting cases.

She has served on our Board of Directors and held the position as Secretary. Any story about Robin would not be complete without mentioning that she has supplied cases of water, for those who come in for mediation — without complaining, and always doing so with enthusiastic willingness!

Thanks, Robin!

QUOTES FROM PAST MEDIATION PARTICIPANTS

Ever wonder what people think, once they experience mediation? Well, here are some actual quotes, taken from some of our exit surveys, when asked "what did you like about mediation?":

"I was able to express my feelings without being judged or criticized."

"We came to a better understanding about the situation and have better communication."

"The mediators made me feel comfortable to express all concerns and solutions."

"(The mediators) put our words into phrases so (the other participant) and I could understand each other."

"Talking aloud about problems we are having."

(SEE QUOTES Page 8)

WCCMC HOLIDAY PARTY

By Carol Schofield,
WCCMC Volunteer

As I was driving to the Red Men's Club on Thursday, January 15th, I wasn't sure what to expect. Where exactly was the club? Was I dressed appropriately in casual clothes for a holiday party? Would I know anyone and if so, would I remember names? Would everyone be talking about mediations and what could I contribute having only a few mediations under my belt? Would there be a long (boring), formal program recognizing people I may not know? Who would I sit with? It was such a cold night--the comforts of home were calling. Since I am not a

quitter, I parked the car and walked through the front doors to gain entrance into the locked area by one of the "Red Men."

When I was ushered into the appropriate room, I was quickly greeted by Monica and Linda and moved my way towards the appetizers and an evening full of great food and fellowship. In a matter of seconds, I felt the mood of the group, and I relaxed. This was a time to socialize with others who have a common cause. It didn't matter what anyone wore or if someone was a staff member, mediator, or board member. We talked, reached over each other to finish the cheese dip, smiled for Monica's many camera flashes, and

then talked and laughed some more over a meal of comfort food--fried chicken, scalloped potatoes, and country style green beans. What more could anyone want?

As I drove home, I was glad I had accepted the invitation. My stomach and soul were satisfied. Not only did I have a delicious meal, but the gathering represented the world the way I would like it to be - a group of diverse individuals who relate in ways which display their common beliefs of communication, peace, equity, and justice **AND** have fun in the process.



Some Pictures from the
Holiday Party



MLK DAY ON!

By: Billy Bundesen
AmeriCorps Volunteer

Every year of January 19th, people all over the world take time to remember the life and teachings of Martin Luther King, Jr. This year, the AmeriCorps members with WCCMC were given the task of organizing an event to celebrate a man who continues to inspire us with his speeches on peace and equality. Thirteen volunteers participated in a DAY ON at the Salvation Army soup kitchen in Hagerstown. From making tuna sandwiches to mopping floors to serving the 70 plus people who

frequent the soup kitchen on a daily basis, there was plenty to do. During the event the kitchen's manager Diane Rowe said with a laugh, "I'm usually doing this by myself and running around like a chicken with its head cut off!"

Many of the volunteers heard about the event from numerous websites, including President Barack Obama's Inauguration site at MoveOn.org, a site for people looking to take a more active role in our democracy. One of the volunteers was Steve Weiss, who began volunteering

Working with a purpose at the Salvation Army's dining hall



for the Obama Campaign soon after he retired. "Working in the campaign got me energized about volunteering. I was excited to find an opportunity to help in Hagerstown."

POLICE CADETS TAKE COURSE IN CONFLICT RESOLUTION

By Jennifer Arnoth,
WCCMC Volunteer

This past January, the Washington County Community Mediation Center (WCCMC) conducted its third annual Law Enforcement Mediation (LEM) training: a program that trains new cadets in the Western Maryland Police Academy in basic conflict resolution skills. WCCMC's Kathy Gallagher, Thom Davis, and Jennifer Arnoth were joined by Ben Lieu from the Department of Justice to present this 2-day "crash course" in conflict resolution skills, designed to enhance the most vital tool on an officer's tool belt: communication skills.

Communication skills? Isn't a baton or stun-gun more important than the words an officer uses? As it turns out, the vast majority of the calls that the Hagerstown Police officers get are non-criminal cases. This means that the majority of an officer's tenure serving the community is not spent using those special weapons or locking people up, but rather communicating with

civilians about their conflicts.

The crux of the LEM training was to help these new officers recognize the impact of their listening and communication skills. Police officers going through their regular in-service training learn to separate the civilians in conflict, de-escalate tensions, and then dictate to the civilians what they must do. Problem is, if the officers don't really listen to what the civilians are saying, or if the officer directs them to take actions that don't support the participants, then the participants are often back at each other's throats the moment the officer walks out the front door.

Officer Heckman of the Hagerstown Police Department spoke to the new officers on day two of the training and vouched for the importance of "doing it right the first time." Heckman impressed upon these new officers the importance of empowering the civilians to come up with their own solutions that work for them. The better they can listen to what the participants are

saying, the better they can truly serve the needs of their community.

In the LEM training, the officers were taught many skills borrowed from the mediation field. Through role plays and other experiential exercises, the officers learned and practiced active listening and reflective statements, and learned how to support the participants in brainstorming and choosing their own solutions. Lieutenant Margaret Kline of HPD noted that this hands-on experience of role-playing is one of the few times in their training when officers get to practice the new skills they have been learning.

Lt. Kline was so excited about the material covered in this two-day training for cadets, that she promptly enlisted the trainers to develop and teach a condensed four-hour training for all of the Hagerstown Police Department officers. The three WCCMC trainers Gallagher, Davis, and Arnoth look forward to conducting these exciting programs in the upcoming months.

CONFLICT IN THE WORKPLACE: BUSINESS MEDIATION

By Dave Warner,
WCCMC Volunteer

Workplace conflict poses unique challenges for many employees, supervisors, and, of course, mediators, once the conflict has escalated to the point of intervention by a third party. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) has been the vanguard agency for handling claims brought before its jurisdiction. The Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) option for employers and claimants is a wonderful resource that has proven effective in assisting parties to reconcile their differences. The Maryland Commission on Human Relations is another agency at the state level to handle claims of discrimination in the workplace and provide mediating opportunities.

Mediating work-place disputes often provides some unique challenges to mediators typically not found in domestic dispute resolution. The

fact that mediators are an objective party able to facilitate some sort of binding resolution is universal. One typical difference is the "lottery" mentality many claimants may have, based on what he or she may have seen in the news, or believes from wives tales of others' successes in settling a claim. There are a few factors in how courts would award claims, and contrary to popular belief, there are monetary limits. If the parties cannot settle using ADR, proving and winning a claim of discrimination can take years and certainly carries a heavy cost burden for everyone involved.

Many times, I have mediated a workplace dispute and the opening comments from the claimant are based in financial demands. This sets a very negative tone for the mediation. Often, the response from the company representative(s) (a lawyer, HR Director, CEO, etc) will be defensive. Power balancing skills are very important for mediators. Employees feel, with reason, that the employer is in a better position financially; the employee can feel as

if he or she has little to no leverage. The employer certainly can get arrogant in the process. The use of caucus should not be ruled out - however, I personally limit my use of it, and will try to keep the parties engaged in meaningful dialogue.

As we see, the process of mediating workplace disputes is no different than domestic disputes. The objectives of the parties are to get their day in court. The goals remain to have the parties resolve and settle their differences in a positive and satisfactory manner, where each party can walk away content. The best prevention for conflict in the workplace is training for all levels of employees, communication, and diligence in maintaining the integrity of standards set forth in our legislative guidance.

WCCMC is funded by:

The Mediation and Conflict Resolution Office,

The Community Foundation of Washington County,

The Washington County Gaming Commission,

United Way of Washington County, and

Corporate and Private Donations.

THANK YOU

to the many businesses who generously donated funding or prizes for Conflict Resolution Day:

The WC Board of Education,

Ellsworth Electric,

Myers Building Systems,

Gardner's Candies,

Oak Printing,

Regal Valley Movie Theater,

Chick-fil-A,

Coldstone Creamery,

Starbucks,

Martin's,

Weis,

Best Buy, and

Target.

MEDIATION TABLE (continued from page 1)

Through our reflective listening and feedback, we slowly watched the emerging awareness as father and daughter, seemingly for the first time, very gradually and begrudgingly heard of each other's lives, positions, and love for each other.

But the real light-bulb moment, the epiphany, that which brings chills, came when the father, who had never laid a hand on his daughter, revealed that as a child, he had been beaten every day of his life until the day he left home, something the sullen and angry daughter had never heard before

that day.

What kind of floodgate of understanding opened up at that mediation, I can't say for sure, but when we finished the process, the father had agreed to go with the daughter to her high school, something Dad was clearly uncomfortable with, to talk over the trouble the girl got into with her teachers, and which had tremendous meaning and importance to the daughter.

The daughter agreed to get back into the family business to earn some money to help out, with

the Dad agreeing to pay for gas and repairs. Both father and daughter agreed to approach Mom jointly and address some of the many unspoken underlying problems rooted there. Finally, both agreed to a more honest and open communication in the added time now set aside to spend together.

I suppose it's my own strong beliefs in fatherhood that affected me, but seeing those two walk out together is a scene I won't soon forget and that remains one of the many reminders of why mediation is so powerful.

QUOTES continued from page 2

"I know how I could have handled the situation or future situations & I can understand each person better."

"(Mediation) gave us time to discuss our feelings with each other."

"I was able to get my feelings out."

"I was able to be myself and vent when I was upset."

"I feel better."

Our services empower individuals to take responsibility for, and control of, their own conflict, through the peaceful process of mediation.

Mediation can be, and often is, an uplifting experience. Relationships are rebuilt and often transformed.

JUNE 2009 MEDIATION TRAINING (continued from page 1)

The training itself will be held at the United Way of Washington County (33 West Franklin St., Suite 203, Hagerstown, MD) on three weekends in early summer 2009: June 6-7; June 13-14; and June 27-28, from 9 AM to 5 PM, with both breakfast and lunch being provided. Please note that to ensure trainees receive the full benefit of all activities and

one another's inputs to the training process, attendance at all three sessions is strictly required.

For more information about the training or mediation services, contact WCCMC at 301-665-9262 or email: vharper215@msn.com

CONVENTION (cont from page 2)

to observe and comment as mediators, on what tools to use for a little information gathering in the situation of the king and his daughters – a family mediation of sorts. There were eight session offerings in the morning from 9:45 to 11:00. The names of the presenters read like 'Who's Who' of the Mediation Community. One of my Divorce Mediation trainers was Martin Kranitz so I opted to take his "Hot Tips for Divorce Mediators", which combined a team of mediators including Martin, John Spiegel, Carl Schneider, Kate Palmisano, and Paul Nathan.

(SEE CONVENTION 2, page 7)

OUR WISH LIST of NEEDED DONATION ITEMS

At WCCMC, we try to keep administrative costs to an absolute minimum, so that donations can go straight into the community. Therefore, if you have access to any of the following goods or services, and could make an in-kind donation, we could put them to great use...

- In-kind printing services of brochures, letterhead, palm cards or bookmarks.

- General office supplies (paper, pens, flip chart paper, note pads, staples, paperclips, rubber bands, ink jet cartridges, etc.)

- Gift cards for office supplies

- Laptop Computer/Cases of bottled water for meetings, other contributions towards food and beverages, for use during our meetings.

- T-shirts, tote bags, hats, boxes of stationery or post-cards, bumper stickers, pens, or youth rubber bracelets

- Gift cards/certificates to use for volunteer recognition

- First aid kits

- Non-perishable snack foods

- Tissues

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Dave Jordan—Treasurer

Deborah Jean Ellis

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David Gysberts

Terry King

Patricia Miller

CONVENTION 2 (from page 7)

The skilled group hit us hard with 10-15 minute presentations from each of the veteran mediators. They shared handouts as well as information on resources available to add to our tool-boxes. Some of the sessions were standing room only. That's very telling in itself. Mediators want quality training! The schedule was jam packed and I wanted more time at each session.

The late morning program, from 11:15 to 12:30, again offered so many excellent choices and eight sessions to pick from! You want to be in many places at one time to get ALL the information, and the good thing is, you couldn't

go wrong. Whatever the session, you could count on getting quality information.

An added benefit this year was to vote on two sessions that perhaps you missed but wanted to attend. Based on the number of ballots returned, the two were offered as Encore Presentations to the schedule that afternoon!

I look forward to the 2010 Convention. Who knows what the planners are working on? One thing I'm sure we can count on is a quality product and true learning experiences from some of the best in this crazy business we call mediation.

The Maritime Institute, Linthicum, Maryland,
site of the Mediation Convention 2009



WCCMC Donation Form

_____ I would like to make a tax-deductible donation for mediation

_____ \$25 _____ \$50 _____ \$100 _____ \$250

_____ \$500 _____ \$1000 Other: _____

_____ I would like to volunteer, please send me more information.

Method of Donation

- Check
- Cash
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Name _____

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Yes, I want to support the efforts of the Washington County Community Mediation Center to increase the recognition and use of conflict resolution techniques within our communities.

101 Summit Avenue
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AmeriCorps Outreach Specialist

RE ENTRY MEDIATION: MARCH 2009 MCTC LAUNCH DATE

By: Valerie Main, WCCMC Executive Director

WCCMC is delighted to announce our partnership with the Maryland Correctional Training Center in an exciting new program designed to help prison inmates reintegrate successfully into society upon their release from incarceration.

Recidivism is a very real problem. Communities are concerned when inmates are released from prison because ex-prisoners will often return to their criminal behavior. Studies show that strong family support is an important indicator of successful reintegration, including predicting successful employment, less drug use, and lower levels of criminal activity. Over 95 percent of inmates eventually leave our prison systems and return to society- back into our neighborhoods and communities. Very few are prepared with a plan for what life will look like when they get out.

Communication between inmates and their loved ones after incarceration is often sparse, or non-existent. In many situations there is lingering conflict; family members may typically feel angry, frustrated, hurt, betrayed, resentful, ashamed, stressed, sad and anxious as a result of the charge, or interactions that took place during the incarceration.

Children of incarcerated family members are the silent witnesses of the family struggle and often become confused, unhappy, and socially



A former Inmate reunites with his family

stigmatized. Frequently the outcome is school-related problems, aggressive behavior, and low self-esteem.

Our goal with this program is to have a positive impact on recidivism by helping inmates and their "support systems" (i.e., family members or loved ones) make a plan, thereby promoting a smooth transition to society when they are released. The re-

entry mediation program offers inmates who are 6-12 months from release the opportunity to reconnect with their loved ones whose support will nurture the successful transition back into society for both the inmate and the entire community. Re-entry mediation offers an opportunity for everyone involved to talk about their experiences, before and during the incarceration, to be heard by the mediator and each other, to resolve outstanding conflicts, and to establish a plan to move forward productively.

Up to three mediation sessions will be offered by WCCMC to inmates and loved ones pre-release, and will be continued in their home community to help with any future conflict or barriers they may face after release. After inmates are released, their files are sent to the community mediation center located in the county or city where they are returning to live, for a series of follow-up mediation sessions.