

AROUND THE COUNTY

# Mediation Services works to create peaceful solutions

By SUE AUSTRENG  
Staff Writer

Not long ago Russel Larson was a drug addict, desperate to do anything it took to feed his habit.

Why, he even broke into his mother's house and stole tools and electronics, jewelry – anything he could pawn to get cash to buy the heroin he so desperately craved.

Sure enough, Larson was arrested, charged and sentenced.

But restoration – true restoration – took place, not in the jail cell, but in a quiet office at Mediation Services for Anoka County (MSAC).

There, Nancy Ernewein, restorative justice specialist for MSAC, met with Larson and his mother, helping them to speak openly and honestly with each other, face the young man's addictions and find recovery and reconciliation.

"Mediation Services was truly an answer to prayer,"

Larson said. "Mediation created the foundation of honesty on which trust could eventually be built."

"Mediation healed my family."

Larson shared his story with an audience of police officers, attorneys, judges and other local peacemakers who gathered for the MSAC fund-raiser/volunteer recognition event staged at St. Stephen's Catholic Church March 17.

"That really took some guts to get up there and tell your story, but it really does show what Mediation Services can do to create peaceful solutions, to bring healing. Thank you. Thank you for sharing your story," Rev. Mike Van Sloan, pastor at St. Stephen's, said to Larson.

Among those in the audience listening to Larson's testimony was the event's keynote speaker – newly-elected Anoka County Attorney Tony Palumbo.

Palumbo shared his

perspective on community trends and his dedication to MSAC's partnership with the Anoka County Attorney's Office.

"Many times disputes can be settled if they just talk about it. Mediation helps solve problems quickly, brings about peace and helps people do what they should be doing: solving problems themselves," Palumbo said.

### Peaceful solutions

Since 1987, MSAC, a private, non-profit organization has been helping to manage and resolve conflict through education and conflict resolution services.

MSAC's mission statement describes the agency's purpose:

- To enhance relationships among Anoka County residents by providing voluntary mediation services.

- To promote and educate the Anoka County community in alternative dispute

resolution techniques which encourage peace and harmony in the community.

- To supplement the legal system by providing an alternative process for dispute resolution.

MSAC, a 501(c)3 organization, offers its services at no charge to the parties – unless the mediation is for a large group, involves monetary recovery or is a post-divorce issue.

### Who needs mediation?

Folks needing mediation could be neighbors with barking dog issues, employers and employees, landlords and tenants, bullies and their targets... mediation works to bring resolution before things get ugly.

"This gives the parties great satisfaction because they have a voice (in the resolution). They shake hands and say 'thank you.' Believe me, they don't do that after they come before me," said Anoka County District Court Judge Douglas Meslow, describing the value of MSAC's conciliation court mediators before awarding those mediators MSAC's Mediator of the Year award during the March 17 event.

"One year ago MSAC began having conversations with a committee (inspired by Judge Meslow) and court administration to begin providing brief mediation sessions right before judges hear conciliation court cases," said Kathi Jensen, executive director of MSAC, describing the beginnings of the agency's conciliation court mediators.

Last spring, mediation training was provided for 22 Hamline University, St. Paul, law students, and in November, those newly-minted mediators began mediating one day a week.

"According to the judges,



Former addict and offender Russel Larson described the way in which Mediation Services for Anoka County "created a foundation of honesty in which trust could eventually be built."

Photo by Sue Austreng

### Why mediate?

The purpose of mediation is to reduce any animosity which may exist between parties and to develop agreements that are acceptable to everyone involved.

Professionally trained and supervised volunteer mediators assist those involved to successfully resolve problems and disputes on their own using alternative dispute resolution methods.

"Mediation set for us a future of positive interaction," said Larson, the former addict and offender. "I can't express how helpful it was to have Nancy work with us."

To learn more about MSAC, to find out how you can become a mediator, or to make a donation, visit [www.mediationservice.org](http://www.mediationservice.org).

Sue Austreng is at [sue.austreng@ecm-inc.com](mailto:sue.austreng@ecm-inc.com)



Those gathered for the March 17 Mediation Services for Anoka County (MSAC) volunteer recognition and fund-raising event listen as Russel Larson, former addict and offender, describes the healing and restorative powers afforded him when MSAC acted as the bridge between himself and the victim of his crime: his own mother.

# Anoka finalizes new rules on licensing cabs operating in the city

By MANDY MORAN FROEMMING  
Union Editor

After several months of discussion the Anoka City Council has finalized its licensing requirements for taxi cabs operating in the city.

The council unanimously gave its final approval on changes to the ordinance, which has been on the books for more than two decades.

But after the city made a move to start enforcing the requirement of taxis being licensed to operate in Anoka, it has been cause for concern for area cab drivers.

The city has taken a revised approach that will require the licensing of cab companies, but not necessarily individual drivers – unless they are not affiliated with a company licensed by another metro-area agency, said City Manager Tim Cruikshank.

An applicant must submit a copy of their taxi license from another metro area agency and a copy of all current employment policies and practices and current vehicle inspection policies.

The two main concerns of the city are background

checks to ensure drivers have valid licenses and vehicle inspections.

"We'll just take the companies policies and the companies practices in both of those areas," said Cruikshank.

But if the driver is not affiliated with any one company, the driver would have to satisfy the requirements of the ordinance.

"The city will conduct the necessary background investigation on the applicant," said Cruikshank.

The license fee has also been lowered to \$10, down from the original charge of \$100 for the first driver and \$25 for each additional driver. The \$25, first-time administrative fee, will remain.

"The reason we have made

this compromise is that we recognize that there are cab drivers who are independent contractors who have been through a licensing process in other cities," said Mayor Phil Rice. "That is redundant."

### Driver feedback

Anoka cab driver John Shannon said he has concerns about how the ordinance will be enforced and the long-term repercussions on taxi service in the city.

During Monday's council meeting he asked how drivers would know if other cabs have an approval to operate in Anoka.

Cruikshank said the city's focus will be to get the paperwork in order from the companies that operate in Anoka.

"We're not going to be out looking for trouble – I don't know that each cab is even going to have a license in it," said Cruikshank. "If we hear of problems then we're going to need to respond and have the ability to respond appropriately."

The independents and cab companies will be responsible for the conduct of their drivers. Failure to do so may result in the revocation of their license, he said.

"We'll start with the blanket approval and then if there's any acting up we'll intervene," said Cruikshank.

Shannon said the threat to enforce the licensing requirement chased away a lot of cabs that had been serving the late-night bar crowd in

Anoka.

There is not a city, town or suburb north of Minneapolis that has either existing taxi ordinance or is enforcing one, he said.

"I hope this works out, but I've got to be honest with you from my observations from the last few weeks I'm still concerned that this kind of caused a void," said Shannon. "We'll have to see if it gets filled."

Driver Ron Cody is one of two that has already complied with the city's licensing requirement and did so under the original, more expensive rules.

According to Cody, the city should be doing background checks on all drivers and should not be relying on

cab companies to provide that information.

Cody also suggested charging more money for the license and in return giving approved drivers a sticker they could display on their cab.

"I still see other cabs and they're picking people up," he said. "Now we're four months into this and we have nothing resolved."

Cody also expressed a concern that he had been charged a higher rate.

Rice directed Cody to work with the city clerk on that issue and now that the ordinance has received final approval, it will be put into action.

"It will be cleaned up and enforced from here on out," said Rice.

**A NOVENA TO ST. JUDE**  
May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be adored, glorified, loved and preserved throughout the world, now and forever. Sacred heart of Jesus, pray for us. St. Jude, worker of miracles, pray for us. St. Jude, helper of the hopeless, pray for us. Say this prayer nine times a day. By the 8th day your prayer will be answered. Say it for nine days; it has never been known to fail. Publication must be promised. Thank you St. Jude. I Believe!  
Debbie Johnson

**Andover cinema**  
1836 Bunker Lake Blvd.  
www.andovercinema.com  
ADMISSION:  
Children & Seniors \$6.50 all day  
Matinees \$6.50 All shows before 6 p.m.  
Adults \$8.50 All shows after 6 p.m.  
763-754-3000

**SCHEDULE FOR MARCH 25TH - MARCH 31ST** (Schedule subject to change)

<b>SUCKER PUNCH</b> PG13 12:25, 2:40, 4:55, 7:20, 9:35	<b>THE LINCOLN LAWYER</b> R 12:00, 2:25, 4:50, 7:15, 9:40	<b>ADJUSTMENT BUREAU</b> PG13 12:40, 2:50, 5:00, 7:10, 9:20
<b>DIARY OF A WIMPY KID 2</b> PG 12:30, 2:35, 4:40, 6:45, 8:50	<b>BATTLE: LOS ANGELES</b> PG13 12:15, 2:35, 4:55, 7:25, 9:45	<b>GNOMEO &amp; JULIET 2D</b> G 12:30, 2:30, 4:30
<b>PAUL</b> R 12:20, 2:30, 4:40, 7:20, 9:30	<b>RANGO</b> PG 12:05, 2:20, 4:35, 7:10, 9:25	<b>RED RIDING HOOD</b> PG13 7:15, 9:20
<b>LIMITLESS</b> PG13 12:10, 2:20, 4:30, 7:00, 9:10	<b>MARS NEEDS MOMS 3D</b> PG 12:00, 2:00, 4:00, 6:00, 8:00 (No Passes or Discounts)	<b>Have your next Birthday Party here!</b>

**ATTENTION PARENTS**

Are you looking for a caring and supportive high school for your teenager? Northwest Passage High School is a small progressive experiential high school located in Coon Rapids, Minnesota. As part of the school students engage in active field studies at no cost to families. We have less than 1:16 instructor to student ratio.

Call now to arrange a tour and enroll: **763-862-9223**. Space is limited. To learn more visit our website at [www.nwphs.org](http://www.nwphs.org).

Mission: *Rekindling our hope, exploring our world, seeking our path, while building our community.*

Northwest Passage High School is Sponsored by Bethel University

**Investments • Financial Planning • Income Tax**

**10,000 Minnesotans turn 65 every day. Are you ready for retirement? Let our team help you retire with peace of mind.**

From left to right: Nathan Corrov, Brian Ellis, MBA, EA, Tiffany Brynteson, CRPC, Roger C. Kruse, ChFC, CFP®, EA

Over 20 years of managing investments and answering financial questions for people just like you

- Intelligent Investing
- Tax Smart IRA Distributions
- Harvesting Income from Investments
- Strategic Tax Preparation
- Planning Age 70 1/2 IRA Distributions

**FF Wealth Management**  
763.231.2760 • [FFWealthManagement.com](http://FFWealthManagement.com)  
US Hwy. 10 & Hanson, Coon Rapids

Subscribe to the FFP newsletter by emailing [info@ffwealthmanagement.com](mailto:info@ffwealthmanagement.com)