



PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Los Angeles County Students Unite with Attorneys, Judges and Community Members for Event Focused on Violence Prevention through Peer Mediation

What: Sixth Annual Peer Mediation Invitational

When: March 17, 2009 and March 19, 2009 | 9:30a.m. – 1:00p.m.

Pasadena Mayor Bill Bogaard to make opening statement on March 19.

Where: Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals

125 S. Grand Avenue, Pasadena CA, 91105 - Courtroom Three

Pasadena, CA - February 26, 2009 - The Western Justice Center Foundation (WJCF) and Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals in Pasadena proudly present the 6th Annual Peer Mediation Invitational bringing together over 200 students, teachers and volunteers from approximately 21 elementary schools and 18 middle and high schools in Los Angeles County. The Elementary School Invitational will be held March 17 and the Middle and High School Invitational on March 19. Many of the students currently serve as peer mediators on their school campuses, while others are coming to learn peer mediation skills for the first time. All will gather at the historic Western Justice Center Foundation and nearby Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals to engage in mediation role plays and interact with peer mediators and peace-builders from other schools. Celebrating the convergence of both students and professionals, WJCF Executive Director Angela Oh stated, “This is the only event in southern California that brings together such a broad cross-section of students who have been trained as peer mediators and who understand the value of developing skills to promote peaceful resolution of conflicts.”

Attorneys, judges, professional mediators and community members will share their expertise as coaches in mediation role plays, providing constructive feedback for students eager to sharpen their mediation skills and collaborative problem solving. Students will also provide and receive constructive critique from their fellow peer mediators. Following their mediation role plays, high school and middle school students will listen to guest speakers from the Pasadena based organization, Neighborhood Outreach Workers, while the elementary school students will engage in art projects where they will create a visual representation as well as a short narrative on what peaceful conflict resolution looks like in their own life.

Schools from Pasadena include Walden School, Sierra Madre Elementary School, Willard Elementary School, Mayfield Junior School, Oak Knoll Kinderhaus Montessori Elementary, Washington Accelerated School, McKinley School, Field Elementary School, The Frostig School, John Muir High School, Franklin Elementary School, Roosevelt Elementary School, and Marshall Fundamental Secondary School. Schools from Los Angeles, Inglewood, Burbank and Santa Monica school districts will be represented, as well.

Judge Dorothy W. Nelson of the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals and the Western Justice Center Foundation's Executive Director, Angela Oh, will honor each school and student for their support and contribution to peacebuilding during the event's closing ceremony. Two high school students will be awarded the Western Justice Center Foundation's Peacebuilder Scholarship in the amount of \$1,250 each. The scholarship has been generously funded by Bank of the West.

The public is invited to attend the opening statements in Courtroom Three of the Ninth District Court of Appeals Courthouse from 9:30 am to 10:00am in on March 17; and from 9:45 am to 10:15 am on March 19. Opening statements on March 19 will be given by Pasadena Mayor Bill Bogaard.

The PMI was organized by the Western Justice Center Foundation in collaboration with Centinela Youth Services, the Asian Pacific American Dispute Resolution Center, and the Dispute Resolution Services of the Los Angeles County Bar Association and We Care For Youth. This event could not have been possible without the generous support of: Navigant Consulting Inc., California Pizza Kitchen, JAMS Foundation, Bank of the West and Richard Chernick, Esq.

The event meets the needs of students and schools engaged, and interested in, learning more about conflict resolution programs to network with others involved in these programs throughout Los Angeles County, to deepen their knowledge of conflict resolution, and to feel supported and valued for their dedication to peace. As the region faces the current economic downturn, inter-ethnic, inter-racial and gang-related conflicts may rise. It is now more important than ever to give children the tools they will need during their lives to address and resolve conflict peacefully. Peer mediation gives students a greater understanding about the sources of conflict and also teaches them a process for de-escalating and resolving conflict. The event encourages youth who choose peace to continue to use and model these skills with other youth so that the rise in violence that has taken place in our communities can be stemmed.

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