

Collaborative Corner
By: Susan Hurst

Are You a Healer?

At the International Academy of Collaborative Professional's forum in Atlanta at the end of October, Justice Benham, gave an inspired keynote address. He started out by saying that there are three original professions, (get your minds out of the gutter, prostitution is not one). The medical profession, whose purpose is to heal the body. The clergy, is the profession intended to heal the soul. The purpose of the legal profession, according to Justice Benham, is to heal the community.

The broken body seeks a doctor, the broken spirit seeks God, and the broken family turns to us, family lawyers, trusting that we will help. What we do with that trust not only defines us in our relationship to those family members, but also in relationship to our community and to our society at large. Yet, when we litigate, we so often splinter the family further. We so easily turn a crack into a fracture, a scratch into an open wound.

Our job is to solve, to the best of our ability, our client's legal problems. Pursuant to that job, we do everything we can to see that that all of the family law issues -- custody, support, and property division -- are concluded completely. We strive to achieve our client's satisfaction by getting the issues resolved beneficially. These tasks are not just competent professionalism, they are the demands of the law.

But, as Justice Benham, so eloquently noted, a society that operates only within the bounds of the law operates at its most base level. The stricture of law is a minimum acceptable standard of behavior. It is not, must not be the standard to which the community aspires. It does not heal.

To be healing professionals we must go beyond what the law requires. We need to help clients not only comport themselves within the demands of the law, but to aspire to use their resources, including the law, to obtain the most beneficial resolution for themselves, their children and their ex-spouses. We are at our best when we help the family members mend the cracks and bandage the scratches, maybe even pour new foundations. To this we aspire, so that with our help, our clients can move beyond the damage of the divorce and become full assets to their neighbors and friends. Only by helping them heal, can we be healers of our community.