

COLLABORATIVE CORNER

By: Susan A. Hurst

Spreading Peace

At the International Academy of Collaborative Professional's forum in October we were fortunate to have several clients who had been through the process speak to the attendees about their experience. These courageous souls were interviewed by Collaborative Professionals and by the media about their choice to use CP. At the conclusion of the session there was hardly a dry eye in the room.

Many litigators seem wary of CP at present because although they know it may provide the most peaceful and respectful way to end a marriage, they are afraid that it's not what clients want. These litigators believe that clients seek aggression, warriors and defenders, and that encouraging peacemaking will lose them business. *Au Contraire*.

When asked why they chose to participate in the session (on a Sunday afternoon no less), the client participants at the forum spoke about their desire to give back to the CP community because of the positive outcome in their lives. They referred a need to spread the word that CP truly gave them great satisfaction during a very painful period of their lives. They felt the tug of a moral call, a call to speak publicly about their experience, in hope that other families would take the opportunity to form divorced families rather than warring tribes.

One of the women participants was a homemaker from a long-term marriage in need of alimony and support at the end of her marriage. She rejected the traditional litigation approach in favor of CP because she felt that a litigator would present her as a victim in order to obtain the support she needed. As a role model for her daughters, she thought it imperative that they saw her choice of homemaker as a vocation as a laudable one. She wanted to show to her children that marriage should not be avoided merely because it may end in divorce.

A second couple participated in CP for their modification of custody, having been unsatisfied with the result from their litigated divorce. They learned in CP that the litigated divorce resulted in misunderstandings about the power each had going forward. Now they meet regularly to discuss the needs of their child and parenting time flows smoothly for their child. Similarly, another couple had created a divorced family, founded on trust and respect, out of the CP process. A financial professional helped them to meet their goals for their children and for their own lifestyles; they, too, met regularly to discuss the children's needs.

These clients spoke to us, family lawyers. They took their time and took emotional risks to come forward and speak about the benefits of CP. They uniformly concluded that the team approach (using not only lawyers but also financial professionals, divorce coaches and child specialists) was invaluable and suggested that the team be used immediately at the outset. They spread the word asking us to do the same.

Perhaps I should end this article here, since these testimonials are more powerful than any editorial. Still, I can't resist adding that of all the ways I've seen to end a

marriage, CP is the only way I've ever seen that can actually *improve* a parties' relationship. Isn't that worth the risk of trying something new?