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*Voices, Ideas, Views, Insights and Dialogues for Professionals Working with Families in Transition*

## THE NEW YORK CHAPTER OF AFCC MISSION STATEMENT

Fall 2003

*THE WELL-BEING OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES IS A FUNDAMENTAL GOAL OF OUR SOCIETY AND ITS LEGAL SYSTEM. THE NEW YORK STATE CHAPTER OF THE ASSOCIATION OF FAMILY AND CONCILIATION COURTS IS DEDICATED TO USING THE EXPERIENCE, KNOWLEDGE, AND RESOURCES OF JUDGES, MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS, ATTORNEYS, LAW GUARDIANS, MEDIATORS, AND OTHER PROFESSIONALS, TO IMPROVE THAT WELL-BEING THROUGH COOPERATIVE EFFORTS THAT SEEK NEW, LESS ADVERSARIAL APPROACHES TO THE RESOLUTION OF CHILD-CENTERED LEGAL MATTERS.*

### CO-PRESIDENTS' MESSAGE

Honorable Evelyn Frazee  
Lauren Behrman, Ph.D

Prior to becoming involved in the creation of a New York Chapter of AFCC, we did not know each other. However, we shared a common excitement about the new ideas and approaches to handling family conflict presented by AFCC. We, like many of our colleagues on the Board, feel that it is important to provide a forum for interdisciplinary dialogue of family issues in New York and for learning from our colleagues.

AFCC-NY presents an opportunity for professional growth, interdisciplinary cooperation, achieving better outcomes for those we serve, and finding greater satisfaction in our work. We hope that you will join us in working together, listening, and learning from each other. By becoming involved in AFCC-NY, you can help to create an environment in which the well-being of children and families is better served.



Hon. Evelyn Frazee    Lauren Behrman, Ph.D.

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### WHAT IS AFCC ALL ABOUT?

#### An Overview of AFCC & the NY Chapter

AFCC is an international and interdisciplinary association of family, court and community professionals dedicated to the constructive resolution of family disputes. Membership numbers over 2000 and include judges, lawyers, mediators, mental health professionals, court administrators, researchers, educators, and other profes-

sionals who work with families in conflict. AFCC membership spans the globe and includes representatives from six continents: North and South America, Europe, Asia, Africa and Australia. There are AFCC chapters in Arizona, California, Florida, Massachusetts, Missouri, New Jersey and Texas. For more information,

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Join us at the Fall Conference on November 21st (see page 6).

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see their websites at [www.afccnet.org](http://www.afccnet.org).

Although AFCC has been around for 40 years, there was barely a presence in New York State. Many professionals in the multi-disciplines dealing with matrimonial law and families in transition were not aware of the existence of AFCC. In anticipation of AFCC's first regional conference in New York, scheduled for September 14, 2001, the opportunity was seized to try and assess interest in developing a New York Chapter of this organization. There was great interest and enthusiasm following the first mailing. However, the tragedy and crisis in our country on September 11, 2001, prevented us from following through at that time.

When the New York Conference was rescheduled to March 18, 2002, an organizational meeting was scheduled at the end of the conference. The response was amazing and energizing: 50 people attended to express interest in forming an AFCC Chapter in New York State. From that meeting, a steering committee was formed. Within two months, a launch event took place in May, 2002. The evening networking meeting at the offices of Orrick, Herrington and Sutcliffe, LLP, with remarks by Justice Jacqueline Silbermann, Statewide Administrative Judge for Matrimonial Matters, and Professor Andrew Shepard, was well attended. Our letter of intent was filed, and we received provisional chapter status in

*In the past year, we have made significant strides while remaining a fledgling chapter with huge potential for growth.*

August, 2002.

The first board meeting was held in November, 2002, and a slate of officers was elected. Many of the members of the Board were also members of the steering committee that was instrumental in bringing the New York Chapter of AFCC to fruition. The Board has been busy doing the organizational work for our new AFCC Chapter in New York. As a part of that endeavor, we have been approved as a not-for-profit corporation and are seeking tax exempt status. Bylaws and a mission statement have been adopted.

We hosted our first annual conference, titled *Cutting Edge Innovations for Today and Tomorrow: Multi-Disciplinary Integrated Approaches for Children and Families in Transition*, in November, 2002, at the Association of the Bar of the City of New York. The conference commenced with remarks of New York State Chief Administrative Judge Jonathan Lippman, who gave an overview of new projects that are being undertaken by the court system affecting the areas of family and matrimonial law. The morning plenary session focused on the work of the Parent Education Advisory Board which is developing procedures, standards and guidelines for

parent education in New York State, with a presentation by Parent Education Advisory Board Chairperson and AFCC-NY Co-Chair Honorable Evelyn Frazee and a distinguished interdisciplinary panel who discussed their observations and thoughts on parent education. Members of that panel were Lauren Behrman, Ph.D., Hon. Jacqueline Silbermann, Hon. Joseph Lauria, Vicki Lutz, Esq., Catherine Douglass, Esq., JoAnne Pedro-Carroll, Ph.D., Andrea Phoenix, Esq., and Elayne Greenberg, Esq. The early afternoon was devoted to five workshops. This was followed by a presentation by the interdisciplinary team of judges, attorneys, and mental health professionals from Connecticut on their innovative and collaborative approach to handling high-conflict custody cases.

In March, 2003, a Board retreat was held to give Board members an opportunity to get better acquainted and to work on the creation of a vision and mission statement for the New York Chapter of AFCC. As a result of the discussions at the Board retreat, a pilot project has been undertaken for the introduction and use of parenting plans in the courts.

In April, 2003, there was a networking event that provided an interdisciplinary look at effective cross-examination of a mental health expert in custody cases. As a special project, a committee is working on developing standards and protocols for custody evaluations by mental health professionals.

*To reach our full potential, we need you to be involved.*

As you can see, much is happening at AFCC-NY. In the past year-and-a-half we have made significant strides, yet we still remain a fledgling chapter with huge potential for growth. There are many exciting projects and opportunities for AFCC-NY and its members. To reach our full potential, we need you to be involved. While in the initial phases much of the work has been done by the steering committee and then the Board, the next phase is for significant and meaningful membership participation. We hope you will join in helping to make your AFCC-NY Chapter grow.

**AFCC-NY thanks**  
 David Z. Nirenberg, Esq.  
 and  
 Orrick, Herrington, Sutcliffe, LLP  
 666 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
 New York, New York  
 for donating their legal services to  
 our Chapter and for making their  
 offices available for our networking events.

## JOINING AFCC AND THE NEW YORK CHAPTER

You must be a member of AFCC to join the New York Chapter. AFCC annual dues are \$150 (individual); \$60 (student); \$360 (institutional); \$130 (gift -nonrenewable) or a one time fee of \$1500 for life membership. The annual dues to also become a member of the New York Chapter of AFCC are \$45 per year (individual) and \$100 (institutional). There is no fee for students to join the New York Chapter. You may also become a Founding Member of the New York Chapter by making a one-time \$100 contribution. Founding Members must be members of the New York Chapter and will be limited to 100 people. Membership is open to all professionals who work with families in conflict.

As a member of AFCC, you will receive the *Family Law Review*, their newsletter, membership rates for conferences, have the opportunity to meet and network with professionals from around the world, plus other benefits. As a member of AFCC-NY, you will have the opportunity to attend its networking events, to meet other professionals interested in working with families, be able to attend the annual conference at a reduced rate, and perhaps most important, have a role in reducing conflict for families going through divorce or other crisis that brings them into contact with the legal system.

For more information about AFCC, check the website at [www.afcc.net.org](http://www.afcc.net.org). For more information about AFCC-NY, check the website at [www.afccny.org](http://www.afccny.org).

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## INTRODUCING THE BOARD MEMBERS OF AFCC—NY

The Board of the newly created New York Chapter of AFCC held its initial meeting following the first annual Fall Conference on November 22, 2002. Many of the members of this initial Board were also members of the steering committee that laid the groundwork for the New York Chapter of AFCC. The following people were elected officers at the meeting:

Co-Presidents: Lauren Behrman, Ph.D.  
& Hon. Evelyn Frazee

Vice-President: Elaine Kirsch, LL.B., LL.M.

Secretary: Steven Abel, J.D.

Treasurer: Teresa Ombres, J.D.

The Board is composed of professionals from across New York State and from various disciplines that work with families: judiciary, law, law guardian, poverty law, academia, child psychology, social work, mediation, and domestic violence prevention advocacy. By way of introduction, a brief biographical sketch of each of the Board members follows:

**STEVEN ABEL, J.D.** – Steve is a divorce attorney and mediator who practices primarily in Rockland County. He is with Center for Family and Divorce Mediation in New City. Steve also serves as Secretary of AFCC-NY.

**LAUREN BEHRMAN, Ph.D.** – Most of Lauren's practice is in Westchester County, where she works as a clinical psychologist with children of divorce. Lauren also works

with high-conflict divorcing and divorced parents in a focused co-parenting intervention. She is Co-President of the New York Chapter of AFCC.

**SUZANNE BRUNSTING, J.D.** – A matrimonial attorney in Rochester, Sue now devotes her professional time to collaborative law and training others in this new approach to representing and serving clients.

**STEVEN DEMBY, Ph.D.** – Steve is a clinical psychologist in practice in Brooklyn who works with divorcing parents and their children, including high-conflict families. He also performs forensic custody evaluations. He is a faculty member of the Family Forensics Program at the Washington Square Institute and participates in the Manhattan PEACE program. He is Co-President Elect for a term beginning January, 2004.

**HON. W. DENNIS DUGGAN** – Judge Duggan is a Family Court Judge in Albany County.

**LEONARD FLORESCUE, J.D.** – Len is a matrimonial attorney who practices in Manhattan and also is an Adjunct Professor teaching family law at Fordham Law School. He is Co-President Elect for a term to begin January, 2004.

**HON. EVELYN FRAZEE** – Justice Frazee serves as a Supreme Court Justice in the Seventh Judicial District (Rochester). She is chair of the Parent Education Advisory Board which will be recommending standards, guidelines and requirements for parent education in New York State. She is Co-President of AFCC—NY.

**CECILE GREEN, C.S.W.** – Cecile is a clinical social worker and director of the Parents Resource Center in Queens. She works with children with special issues and is also involved with the Queens PEACE program.

**ELAYNE E. GREENBERG, M.S., J.D.** – Elayne splits her work between Queens and Nassau County as ADR Development Director of EAC Custody and Visitation Mediation Program, director of the Queens PEACE program sponsored by Community Mediation Services, Inc., and Adjunct Professor at Hofstra University. She is the newly elected chair of the New York State Bar Association ADR committee.

**TRACY M. HAMILTON, J.D.** – Tracy is the director of the law guardian program in the Fourth Department.

**ELAINE KIRSCH, LL.B., LL.M.** – Westchester is the principal area where Elaine conducts her business as a family mediator. Elaine is Vice-President of the Chapter.

**HON. JOSEPH M. LAURIA** – Judge Lauria serves as the Administrative Judge of Family Courts in New York City.

**VICTORIA LUTZ, J.D.** – Vicki is the executive director of the Pace Women's Justice Center, which annually represents about 1,500 victims of domestic violence and their children and creates training programs and educational opportunities for law students in many topic areas relating to domestic violence, sexual assault, and elder abuse.

**PAUL J. MELLER, Ph.D.** – Paul is an Associate Professor in the Department of Psychology at Hofstra University in Nassau County. He also maintains a private practice in Suffolk County in which he conducts forensic evaluations, provides psychotherapy to children and families, and serves as a parenting coordinator and a child advocate.

**LARRY MUSNIK, J.D. / PAMELA SAPERSTEIN** – As a third year law student at Hofstra University, Larry was the law student representative on the Board. Larry graduated in May. **Pamela Saperstein**, a second year law student at Hofstra, now occupies the student seat on the Board.

**TERESA OMBRES, J.D.** – Teresa served three years as Director of the Custody-Visitation Mediation Program for Community Mediation Services, Queens County. She now devotes 100% of her working time to her private practice, which centers on divorce mediation, collaborative law, and traditional representations. She serves as Treasurer of AFCC-NY, Chair of the Government Affairs Committee, Chair of the Family and Divorce Mediation Council of Greater New York, and is active in other mediation organizations.

**PATRICK O'REILLY, J.D.** – Buffalo is the location of Patrick's law offices, where he is a matrimonial attorney. Patrick is Secretary of the Family Law Section of the New York State Bar Association and President of the New York Chapter of the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers.

**JOANNE PEDRO-CARROLL, Ph.D.** – As a child psychologist, JoAnne has a practice in Rochester and is affiliated with the Children's Institute of the University of Rochester, where she developed Children of Divorce Intervention Project (CODIP). She is Director of Program Development at the Children's Institute. JoAnne is also a member of the New York State Parent Education Advisory Board.

**ANDREA PHOENIX, J.D.** – Andrea is a family and matrimonial lawyer who also serves frequently as a law guardian in Nassau County.

**EMILY RUBEN, J.D.** – As the attorney in charge of the Brooklyn neighborhood office of the Legal Aid Society, Civil Division, Emily's work concentrates on issues of domestic violence and family law.

**ANDREW I. SCHEPARD, J.D.** – A professor of law at Hofstra University, Andy teaches courses in family law. He is a long-standing member of AFCC and is editor of its Family Law Review.

**HON. JACQUELINE W. SILBERMANN** – As a Supreme Court Justice, Justice Silberman handles a matrimonial part. She also serves as the Statewide Administrative Judge for Matrimonial Matters.

**SYDELL SLOAN, M.A.** – Sydell is a family therapist, marriage counselor, and divorce and custody mediator with offices in Queens and Manhattan.

**HON. ELAINE J. STACK** – Justice Stack presides in a matrimonial part of Supreme Court, Nassau County.

**ERIC TEPPER, J.D.** – Eric is an attorney practicing matrimonial and family law throughout the Capital District, Saratoga Region and Upstate New York. All six lawyers in his firm concentrate their practice in divorce and family law.

**ROD WELLS** – Rod started in the field of general mediation, but his work now is in the area of divorce mediation. He is also a marriage and family therapist and a Certified Financial Planner® working principally in Orange County.

#### OPEN FORUM

We hope to stimulate discussion on topical subjects concerning child legal matters. Watch our website at [www.afccny.org](http://www.afccny.org) and list serve at [afccny@pride.hofstra.edu](mailto:afccny@pride.hofstra.edu) for topics. To subscribe to the list serve, send an email to [mailserv@hofstra.edu](mailto:mailserv@hofstra.edu) with "subscribe afccny" (omit the quotes) in the body of the message.

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR AFCC - NY PARTICIPATION

The first order of business for any new chapter is to solicit members who are committed to the AFCC goal of reducing conflict in dissolving families. As our Mission Statement sets forth, we are dedicated to using the experience, knowledge and resources of an interdisciplinary group of professionals to find more cooperative and less adversarial approaches to the resolution of child-centered legal matters.

You can help in this effort in several ways by: (1) becoming a member of AFCC and AFCC-NY; (2) informing your colleagues and other professionals about AFCC and urging them to join AFCC and AFCC-NY; (3) becoming active in the New York Chapter of AFCC; and (4) attending networking events and conferences.

The lifeblood of an organization is in the work of its committees. Listed below are the committees of AFCC-NY, a brief description of their work, and contact information for the chair(s). **Please contact the chair of any committees on which you are interested in working. Your help is needed to ensure the growth and success of the NY Chapter!**

### LEGISLATION COMMITTEE

**Description:** Monitor proposed bills and new legislation in the areas of divorce and family law and to apprise members of developments.

**Co-Chairs:** Steve Abel, J.D.  
[sabel@igc.org](mailto:sabel@igc.org)  
(845) 634-4700

Paul J. Meller, Ph.D.  
[Paul.Meller@hofstra.edu](mailto:Paul.Meller@hofstra.edu)  
(516) 463-5628

### SPECIAL PROJECTS COMMITTEE

**Description:** Perform in-depth review, study and analysis on discrete issues with recommendations for action or change.

**Co-Chairs:** Marion Gindes, Ph.D.  
[Mgindes@clinicians2consultants.com](mailto:Mgindes@clinicians2consultants.com)  
(914) 833-1944

Eric Tepper, J.D.  
[etepper@gtlaw.com](mailto:etepper@gtlaw.com)  
(518) 399-5951

### NEWSLETTER/PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMITTEE

**Description:** Develop a chapter communication system (i.e., newsletter, website) to provide information about AFCC-NY, its members, events and issues of interest. At least two newsletters per year should be produced.

**Chair:** Tracy Hamilton, J.D.  
[thamil@courts.state.ny.us](mailto:thamil@courts.state.ny.us)  
(585) 530-3176

### PROGRAM PLANNING COMMITTEE

**Description:** Plan and publicize AFCC-NY Chapter programs (e.g., networking events, annual conference)

**Chair:** Steven Demby, Ph.D.  
[sdemby@aol.com](mailto:sdemby@aol.com)  
(718) 797-2683

### MEMBERSHIP DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

**Description:** Serve as a resource to answer/direct inquiries about membership in AFCC and AFCC-NY and to actively work to promote membership (e.g., develop ideas and opportunities to speak to various groups about AFCC; follow-up with non-AFCC member attendees at network events and conferences).

**Chair:** Jay Silverstein, J.D.  
[jsilverstein@blankrome.com](mailto:jsilverstein@blankrome.com)  
(212) 885-5000

## AFCC-NY Annual Conference

### *sex, lies & family law: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue for Change*

Date: November 21, 2003; 8:00 Registration; 9:00-3:45 Conference

Location: New York State Judicial Institute at Pace University  
84 North Broadway  
White Plains, New York

#### Morning Session

- The Matrimonial Rules: Tenth Anniversary Retrospective  
Hon. Jacqueline Silbermann, Statewide Administrative Judge, Matrimonial Matters
- Dialogue with Attendees
- Top Ten Ideas for the Future! Lessons Learned from Other Jurisdictions  
Professor Andrew Schepard, Hofstra University School of Law
- Suggestions for Change in New York State: Small Group Interdisciplinary Discussions
- Looking Forward: Visions for New York State  
Justice Jacqueline Silbermann and Judge Joseph Lauria, Administrative Judge, Family Courts, NY City

#### Afternoon Session—Workshops

- Managing the Conflict: Parenting Coordinators for Post-Judgment Families  
Elayne Greenberg, J.D. (Moderator); Justice Anthony Marano; Robin Deutsch, Ph.D.
- Using Parent Education to Foster Family Resilience  
Justice Evelyn Frazee (Moderator); JoAnne Pedro-Carroll, Ph.D.; Geri Fuhrmann, Ph.D.
- Setting the Stage: Crafting Parenting Plans  
Professor Andrew Schepard (Moderator); Justice Jacqueline Silbermann; Judge W. Dennis Duggan; Victoria Lutz, J.D.; Marsha Kline Pruett, Ph.D.
- Collaborative Law & ADR Alternatives: Complementary or Antagonistic?  
Steven Abel & Teresa Ombres (Moderators); Ronald Phillips, J.D.; Kenneth Neumann, M.S
- Child Support in Shared Residency: Use and Misuse of the Guidelines  
Leonard Florescue, Esq. (Moderator); Hon. Esther Furman; Jane Venohr, Ph.D.; Stephen Gassman, J.D.

Closing remarks

**Conference attendees are invited to attend a committee meeting after the conference.**

#### **Committees are:**

- Program Planning
- Newsletter/Public Relations
- Membership Development
- Legislation
- Special Projects

#### **CONFERENCE REGISTRATION FEES**

☛	AFCC-NY Member & Judiciary	\$ 95.00
☛	Non-member	\$125.00
☛	Student	\$ 35.00
☛	CLE Credit	\$ 35.00

Lunch & program materials included. Hardship Policy available. Call (718) 767-7667 with questions.

Accommodations at group rate of \$119.00 (plus tax) per night available at Crowne Plaza, White Plains. Call: (914) 821-1334. Hotel Reservation Deadline: October 30, 2003.