

Justice center joins disputing parties

By Stacie Thomas

Roommate squabbles, landlord-tenant disputes and neighborhood arguments don't have to lead to legal battles. Now, they may lead to the Lincoln Neighborhood Justice Center, 3601 Calvert St.

The center provides mediators free of charge to help disputing parties communicate through mediation. The mediators aren't counselors, center director Rebecca Winston said. They don't tell clients how to solve problems nor do they make value judgments

be solved through better communication, she said.

The center has operated for 1 1/2 years and claims a 75 percent success rate. It has handled about 150 cases.

Winston said some problems only require a phone call to solve. Here's how. After the center is contacted by one of the disputing people, a mediator calls the other person and restates the dispute from the perspective of the first person. The mediator then asks if the other person agrees or disagrees and if there is the possibility of reconciliation.

Once the case has been restated by

The clients then work toward a resolution with the mediator going back and forth between them until the resolution is acceptable to both parties. Ordinarily this process takes two to three hours, Winston said.

Once the parties agree to a resolution, it is written down and signed. Winston said she thinks signing the resolution also gives each person a possessory interest.

"When you own or possess something, you generally want to follow through with it," she said. "This is the reason for our success rate."

The mediators periodically check with their clients to make sure the resolution was successful.

If the resolution failed, the center offers to mediate again, although only about 20 percent of the failed cases will be remediate, Winston said. The others are referred to lawyers, small claims court or other agencies.

Winston, who also maintains a private law practice, said she receives \$150 per month for her expenses. She said she takes each call, reviews every case and assigns mediators to them, and handles most of the center's paperwork.

All other workers at the center are volunteers and the center is supported entirely by donations.

Rhonda Kenney has been working as a mediator for two years. Kenney, a senior criminal justice major at UNL, said she became involved with the center when she was looking for practical experience in her major.

Working as a mediator has given her an understanding of what bothers people and the different levels of hostility, Kenney said.

Mediators receive a total of 16 to 18 hours of instruction in safety techniques, techniques for reducing hostility between people and stress management, Winston said.

The center also has a special program to help juveniles make restitution to victims for vandalism and misdemeanor criminal mischief. Winston said the center tries to make sure juveniles more aware that the victims actually lost something. It may also help the victims deal with any hostility or fear resulting from the crime.

"It doesn't make the victims whole, but it helps," Winston said. "It makes the victims know the system is actually starting to work for them."



Craig Andressen/Daily Nebraskan

Becky Winston at the Neighborhood Justice Center.

about who is right, Winston said.

"Our society has been so geared toward having someone else solve our problems," Winston said. "The Justice Center is basically a place to learn to solve our own problems."

According to Winston, most people learn early to rely on others to solve problems for them. When a mother separates two arguing children and forbids them to speak, she is teaching them to avoid working out their own problems, Winston said.

This lesson has caused many to resort to the judicial system to solve every day problems which could easily

the mediator, the people may be able to solve the dispute simply because the phone call opens communication lines. Winston said the people most likely either have been yelling or not talking at all.

"When you've been yelling or not talking, you're not working toward a solution," she said.

If the people still are unable to agree on a resolution, the mediator asks if they are interested in mediation at the center.

During the mediation process, the clients discuss the dispute in person while the mediator looks for common ground.

High blood pressure. Treat it and live.



American Heart Association

WE'RE FIGHTING FOR YOUR LIFE

W.C. Frank

"A Frank We Can All Afford"

Happy Frank Says:

SUNDAES

Variety of Flavors: Hot Fudge, Chocolate, Pineapple, Strawberry, & Butterscotch.

RECEIVE 1 FREE TOKEN
July 30-Aug. 5

69¢

GRAND OPENING SPECIALS

FOOTLONG

69¢



Quart of Brewed Ice Tea, Lemonade, or Coke. **65¢**

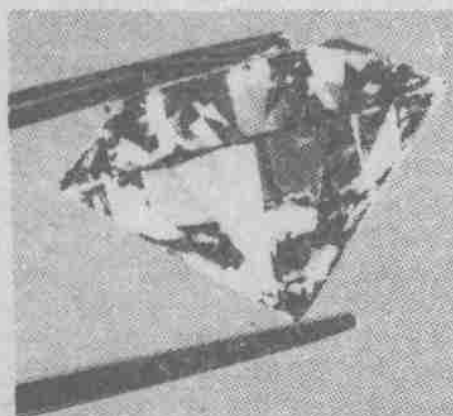
Have You Tried Our New Games?
Spy Hunter • English Darts • Baseball

HOURS:

Sun.-Thurs. 9 a.m.-11 p.m.
Fri.-Sat. 9 a.m.-Midnight

1320 G Street 474-7766

For those who value beauty,
this is an ideal cut diamond.



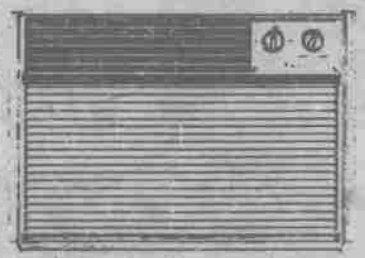
Wright's
JEWELERS

"The Bright Idea"

13th & P St.
Lincoln, Nebraska 68508

**TIRED OF LIVING
IN A
SAUNA?**

**COOL OFF WITH AN
AIR CONDITIONER**



(Rent by the month or
on a summer basis)

**FOR JUST PENNIES
A DAY AT
ACE RENT-TO-OWN!**

**ALSO A COMPLETE STOCK OF
FURNITURE, TV'S, APPLIANCES,
STEREOS AND VIDEO RECORDERS
AVAILABLE FOR RENTAL NOW!**

ACE

RENT-TO-OWN

2429 O St. 474-3443

OPEN MON THRU FRI
9:00 TO 8:30
SAT 9:00 TO 5:00
SUN 12:00 TO 5:00