

For Immediate Release
Contact: Mala Mason
Phone: 412.225.9568
Email: mediationwp@mediate.com

Press Statement

**MEDIATION COUNCIL OF WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA RECOGNIZES
THE HONORABLE THOMAS P. AGRESTI WITH 2016 CONFLICT RESOLUTION DAY AWARD**

PITTSBURGH, PA – The Mediation Council of Western Pennsylvania (“MCWP”) is pleased to announce the recipient of its 2016 Conflict Resolution Day Award, the Honorable Thomas P. Agresti of the U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the Western District of Pennsylvania (“Judge Agresti”). Judge Agresti was formally recognized with the award on November 9, 2016 during the MCWP’s annual Conflict Resolution Day event. The Conflict Resolution Day event was attended by over 50 distinguished members of Western Pennsylvania’s alternative dispute resolution community.

The MCWP selected Judge Agresti for this award due to his significant efforts in his role as Court Liaison to the Western District of PA’s (“WDPA”) Bankruptcy Court Mediation Program, which has experienced an over 400% increase in usage since he started to oversee the program three years ago.

In his presentation of the 2016 Conflict Resolution Day Award, attorney and mediator Norman Gilkey of Babst Calland Clements and Zomnir, P.C. remarked, “As a result of the Judge Agresti’s strong leadership and determination, as well as the assistance of other Bankruptcy Judges in the Western District of Pennsylvania, the number of mediations has increased dramatically during the past several years. There have been many beneficiaries of these efforts, but the most important ones are the parties to litigation who have saved hundreds of thousands of dollars of legal fees which did not need to be incurred because mediation settlements have often been achieved.” Norman continued, “Parties have been able to enjoy more control over their own destinies. Other beneficiaries of the Judge’s efforts have been members of the Bankruptcy Court Mediation Panel who have had the opportunity to conduct a higher volume of mediations (sometimes on a *pro bono* basis) as well as the Court, since judicial economy is, and always has been, a goal of our judicial system.”

Selina J. Shultz, President of MCWP and Managing Partner of The Alternative Group, remarked, “In my years of being involved with MCWP, I have never remembered an easier decision regarding who would receive this award. Judge Agresti has enthusiastically breathed life into a mediation panel that had sat dormant for years. He truly understands the value of mediation for litigants and that has been his focus.”

Judge Agresti was appointed to the U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the WDPA in April 2004. From 2009 to 2013, he served as the Court’s Chief Judge. In addition to serving as the Court Liaison to the Bankruptcy Court Mediation Program, Judge Agresti is also responsible for the development and implementation of the WDPA’s Loss Mitigation Program, which, during its four year existence, has resulted in over 775 residential loan modifications and currently experiences a 67% loan modification success rate. Judge Agresti also serves as Court Liaison to the Standing Local Bankruptcy Rules Committee and has been responsible for the complete review and updating of the Court’s local rules over the last few years.

Prior to taking the bench, Judge Agresti spent 26 years in private practice as a partner with the law firm of Agresti & Agresti in Erie, PA. Throughout that time, his practice was concentrated in the areas of

personal injury as well as commercial and bankruptcy litigation. Judge Agresti spent 22 years as a member of the Private Panel of Chapter 7 Bankruptcy Trustees for the WDPA and was appointed Operating Chapter 11 Trustee in a number of the largest Chapter 11 bankruptcies filed in the WDPA, Erie Division. From 1993 to 2004, Judge Agresti was Special Litigation Counsel for the City of Erie School District and the Millcreek Township School District, two of the largest school districts in Northwestern PA. From 1980 to 1986, Judge Agresti served as an Erie County Assistant District Attorney and periodically served as a Special Deputy Attorney General for the Commonwealth of PA Criminal Division. From 1976 to 1978, Judge Agresti was a judicial law clerk to Chief Judge Gerald R. Weber, U.S. District Court for the Western District of PA.

Judge Agresti is a past president of the Erie County Bar Association. In April 2016 he was recognized by the ECBA and received its lifetime achievement "Chancellor of the Bar" award. He is a 1976 graduate of the University of Pittsburgh School of Law and a member of its *Law Review*. He received his undergraduate degree from the University of Pittsburgh.

In addition to the presentation of the Conflict Resolution Day award, the Conflict Resolution Day event included an Advanced Mediation Training by internationally recognized trainer Ken Cloke entitled, "Understanding the Language of Conflict and the Narrative Structure of Conflict Stories." Ken serves as Director of the Center for Dispute Resolution and author of several well-respected mediation books and is based in Santa Monica, California. Ken also conducted an interactive lecture entitled "Holding Effective Political Dialogues," during the Conflict Resolution Day evening reception.

The 2016 Conflict Resolution Day events were sponsored by a number of generous local individuals and organizations. Platinum Sponsors included Leech Tishman Fuscaldo & Lampl LLC, noblemediation, LLC and the U.S. Bankruptcy Court. Gold Sponsors included Selina J. Shultz and The Alternative Group. Silver Sponsors included Babst Calland Clements & Zomnir, P.C., Howard Schulberg Mediation Services and the Pennsylvania Council of Mediators. Bronze Sponsors of the event included Amy Parker, Beck & Thomas P.C., Behrend Mediation Services, Breen Law Firm and the Law Office of Patricia Wozniak Henk.

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Conflict Resolution Day was initiated in 2005 by the U.S. Association for Conflict Resolution to increase public awareness about conflict resolution and its many benefits. Celebrated on the third Thursday in October, Conflict Resolution Day has been recognized and celebrated in more than 22 states, and at least four different countries. A number of counties, cities and states across the United States, including Pittsburgh, have adopted proclamations designating day- or week-long conflict resolution celebrations.

The Mediation Council of Western Pennsylvania (MCWP) is a local organization that serves the public by providing education about mediation, information about mediator qualifications and assistance in finding qualified mediators. The MCWP also serves professional mediators by providing opportunities for advanced mediation training and continuing mediation education credit, standards of practice and a code of ethics. The MCWP is the only association of professional mediators in Western Pennsylvania. Its mission is to promote the use of mediation and other collaborative processes for resolving disputes and managing conflict, and support the professional development of mediation practitioners.