

Local Attorney Lisa Werner offers legal services that provide

COMMON GROUND

BY *Emily Eileen Carter* **Local Business**
PHOTOGRAPHY BY *Jean Philippe*



Lisa Collins Werner is not afraid to take risks. Against all odds, Lisa branched out from a law firm in St. Louis, Missouri to open one of the first legal staffing agencies in that area. Known as the Esquire Group, many believed there was no need for such an agency, but Lisa saw its potential and became very successful. Lisa, a true visionary, has returned home and started a new business in the Knoxville area called Consensus Mediation Group.

With Lisa's determination and vision, Consensus Mediation Group opened its doors this past September.

"Knoxville is ripe for this type of service. I want people to know that this is an option that is out there," Lisa explained.

Consensus Mediation Group is located in West Knoxville just off Cedar Bluff on North Peters Road. Upon entering, one is struck by the warm earth tones, nature scenes and European vistas decoration on the walls. Cozy furniture and big windows create a safe and friendly environment for people to come and mediate. The facility offers two large conference rooms, four spacious caucus rooms and an in-house kitchen and restroom facility. It's a self-contained community, where those mediating don't have to leave the space until the conflict is resolved.

Nashville and Memphis also have Consensus Mediation facilities, and while there are attorneys in Knoxville who do mediation as part of their practice, there has never been a center devoted solely to mediation. In fact, Lisa and her fellow employees do not practice law. Their jobs are completely devoted to mediation.

"What sets our facility apart is the neutral ground. My sole purpose is to help people walk away with positive results, and there's no conflict of interest here," Lisa explained.

Consensus mediation is a growing alternative nationwide for settling disputes outside of court. Its purpose is to overcome obstacles, find a common ground and allow participants to take an active part in the resolution. Consensus mediation has extremely positive results: 85 percent of all cases that go to mediation result in an agreement. The Consensus Mediation Group is offering these same outstanding results to our local community.

Although it's usually more effective early on, mediation can be used at any phase prior to or during a lawsuit. Not only is it much less time consuming than going to court, but it's much more affordable. There are many types of mediation, ranging from business, medical and corporate to domestic, civil and individual disputes. Consensus Mediation Group is a forum for all types of conflict resolution.

One of the other features that makes Consensus Mediation Group so enticing is the fact that both parties in a dispute get the opportunity to privately express all of their concerns, fears and issues regarding a conflict. Lisa noted, "People walk away much more satisfied than when they leave a courtroom. Both parties leave mediation with a reasonable settlement they both helped create and they can both be happy with," Lisa noted.

Lisa sees her company having many roles in the Knoxville community. Consensus Mediation group rents their space to area attorneys as a neutral site for mediation.

"We really want to work on educating people in different areas and developing our own niche in this community. We hope to start a peer mediation network in area schools in the near future," Lisa explains. With goals such as these, it's easy to see the essential assets Consensus Mediate Group provides for the Knoxville community.

"Ultimately, it's about reaching a positive agreement in an ongoing dispute, letting go of old grudges and moving forward into the future," Lisa states. Knoxville can only benefit from such a positive resource.

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