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## Mulford Mediation helps divorcing people find agreement and makes the process less stressful and damaging

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Observer staff

In 1962, Neil Sedaka had a #1 hit on the billboard charts telling us, "Breaking Up Is Hard to Do;" that has proved to be true, financially, property-wise and emotionally for many people. Now in its 25th year, Mulford Mediation has provided a method whereby a couple splitting up can work together to come to an agreement and make the process less stressful and damaging.

In Mulford Mediation's current advertising, Philip Mulford, mediator and attorney, succinctly sums up the benefits of mediation, "Stay in Control, Stay Out Of Court, Preserve Your Financial Resources." He has provided mediation for thousands of clients, with very good results even when an agreement initially seems impossible.

He serves all relationships from two to 40 years of marriage. Not all client couples are adversarial, but many are. With those contemplating a divorce, Mulford works toward reaching amicable property and financial arrangements, which are related and important. The couple, not Mulford Mediation, makes the decisions. As mediator, he provides a framework for communication for the clients to solve marital status issues, including staying married, separating or

divorcing. Mulford Mediation helps customize an agreement that addresses the situation's specific needs. Mulford acts as facilitator with a proven process, leading to a successful agreement.

"In Philip's practice, people will pursue communication issues," said Lisa Mulford, who has been married for 22 years to Philip and handles the firm's marketing, website and social media. "Philip gives clients communication coaching that can come up with the solution. He offers 90 minute sessions." Her husband described the process as providing a tune-up. There are future issues to consider when contemplating divorce.

"They share their financial information, so we can begin to plan for the future," said Mulford. It includes a property settlement agreement and financial agreement. The agreement is a binding written contract. Before it is signed, Mulford recommends the parties have it reviewed by their attorneys, usually by email. Only minor changes are customarily suggested, if any, and the clients feel secure in the decision they have agreed to. Mulford said people want to be treated fairly so that they often rely on the law. This can be a wrong assumption.

Mulford recently participated in a collective effort to in-

form those in the local area what his mediation service provides. He coordinated the seminar with a financial planner and invited members of the clergy and others who are involved in relationship disputes. "It was very well received," Mulford said.

"Compliance rates are higher for mediation than court-ordered compliance. Every system is unique." Mediation is driven by making a customized agreement. Clients with no children meet with Mulford for two to three sessions, while those with children meet for three to five sessions. This is before actually drafting the agreement.

Mulford Mediation has offices in Warrenton, Manassas and Fairfax. Sessions are arranged at each of the offices with no set weekly schedule. They are set to meet the needs of clients. There is ordinarily a morning and afternoon mediation scheduled each day, Monday through Friday.

Mulford Mediation opened its Warrenton office in 2000. Its newest office has been opened in Manassas for three years. Philip and Lisa Mulford have two children, a freshman at Arizona State University and a junior at Highland School. As a result, they pass on first-hand experience to their clients.

"I think communication and mediation regarding parenting and children have taught the



Philip Mumford of Mulford Mediation in his Warrenton office. The company is celebrating its 25th year in business.  
E. Bruce Davis / Bull Run Observer

family better ways of communications and respecting each other's differences," said Lisa. "It has taught me to be a better parent." They often heed the advice from their children. They have seen relationships change over the years of their mediation service, but the need for agreement on the vital issues remains consistent.

"We have seen more and more same-sex marriages end in divorce," said Mulford. "Same sex marriage became legal in Virginia in October 2014. Some are eager to mediate." Actually, the issues solved by mediation are the same in a same sex relationship as they are in a same sex marriage.

Seeking a marriage or partnership agreement through the use of attorneys can cost tens of thousands of dollars and remain contentious. It can often deplete

the funds a couple is trying to distribute between both parties. Mediation significantly lowers the costs and produces an agreement constructed by both parties.

More information on Mulford Mediation is available at [www.MulfordMediations.com](http://www.MulfordMediations.com). To reach the Warrenton office, readers can call 540-341-4615; the Manassas and Fairfax offices, 703-222-0124.

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