

AMBUNK is a publication of  
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### THIS WEEK

The September 20, 2021 club meeting was called to order by Kelly Harris. Hannah Muirhead led the group in prayer and the Pledge of Allegiance.

### GUEST SPEAKER

Sarah Head spoke to us about the Early Settlement Mediation program. She is the Director of the SW OK office, which is located at Cameron University. They cover 12 counties in our region.

This program was set up by the Oklahoma State Supreme Court as a fast and inexpensive way for two parties to settle many types of disputes without the cost, complication and time spent going to court. Most often they mediate cases like divorce, but also handle cases like HOA disputes, conflicts involving property, money, transactions, assault or harassment or even neighborhood disturbances via noise, animals, etc.

Sarah has a cadre of volunteers to help with cases. They're community members who like helping people with conflict resolution. They're trained and certified to mediate cases. Some are attorneys, but do not provide any legal advice in their roles as mediators. They are neutral third parties with nothing vested in the outcome of a dispute. They help guide the two parties in a



dispute, but it is up to the two parties to reach an agreement, let a judge decide or work out the issue via attorneys. Not everyone using mediation has a court case or an attorney.

How is this program free? Early Settlement Mediation is funded by a \$7 share of fees from every court case filed in Oklahoma.

There was a lot of discussion in the Q&A session. Are decisions made in mediation legally binding? Yes, they are if a judge signs off on them. Parties can put the agreement in writing, give it to lawyers to review & convert into formal documents to present to a judge. This is common in larger civil cases. In small claims mediators will fill out forms for the parties to give directly to a judge.

One person asked if mediated results of a HOA dispute can be legally binding. If two sides agree yet one side doesn't comply the agreement can be used as evidence in court.

Sarah's office has some *repeat customers* who frequently marry & get divorced. Many who come to the office are referred by the court system. Some cases come via the small claims docket.

Club member Scott Meadors, a District Judge, the mediation program is extremely helpful. Depending on the case some parties choose to hire their

own mediator. That can be costly. An increasing number of litigants operate *pro se*, maybe with no attorneys at all. In the context of divorce, small claims and similar areas many of those parties can't afford to hire a mediator. Services provided by Sarah's office are a huge help to those people *and take some of the work load off the courts.*

### ANNOUNCEMENTS

Our club has started holding evening meetings once a month in addition to our weekly meetings during the day. This will give members who have a hard time attending Monday Noon meetings another chance to connect with other club members. The first meeting was held this past Tuesday at Mike's Sports Grille. These meetings will be held on the 3rd Tuesday of the month. The location will change each month to provide variety. Evening meetings will feature a mix of club business and fellowship. We'll give some advance notice of the time & place of meetings.

At the end of the club meeting Monday the board voted to approve the purchase of an AM-12 AmTryke.

Jimmy Roggenbuck was picked as Super Hero of the Week. He is a past President ('06-'07) & Big Hatter. Jimmy manages the club's AmTryke efforts and has helped build most of the ramps we've installed in the past 20+ years. He previously was a chiropractor and now manages some commercial properties. Jimmy & his wife Kristal have two kids with physical challenges.

### 50/50

Jeff Dunning picked the Ace of Spades. The pot was left standing at \$345.

### NEWSLETTER

Mark Glenn had the winning ticket.

**GUESTS**  
Sarah Head  
Guest Speaker