workplace wars

Mediator Amy Lieberman resolves office conflict

BY Susanne Tso PHOTO BY Anna Peña
WHEN THERE’S CONFLICT brewing on the job and hostilities are interfering with productivity and souring the environment, what’s an employer or employee to do? A growing number turn to mediation and Amy Lieberman, in particular.

Lieberman, executive director of North Scottsdale-based Insight Employment Mediation, refers to herself as a “full-time neutral.” She is a mediator with the training, skills, experience and ability to help parties resolve conflict outside of court.

It’s a niche she’s carved for herself that suits her background and skills perfectly. Lieberman, 48, draws from her undergraduate training in psychology and her legal knowledge as a noted practicing lawyer to help bickering parties explore options, develop communication and ultimately reach an agreement.

Legal knowledge and credibility are critical to gaining buy-in from clients, says Lieberman, whose name has appeared on the list of Best Lawyers in America for Alternative Dispute Resolution since 2004. In January, she was recognized in the Phoenix Business Journal’s list of “Who’s Who” in the local legal community, and a couple of months later the Journal acknowledged her as one of 50 Outstanding Women in Business.

An understanding ear is an essential part of the reflective process, which helps clients feel affirmed emotionally and become open to other views. Addressing and validating emotions, she asserts, can free clients to set them aside and look at realistic expectations. Once accomplished, Lieberman establishes ground rules, expectations, confidentiality and a sense of dignity for hurting parties.

“But it’s also an evaluative process,” explains Lieberman, citing the importance of legal expertise should the parties decide to go to court. “If you go to court, it’s win or lose,” Lieberman tells clients. “Some people call mediation win-win; sometimes lawyers call it lose-lose. I have a different view. I call it can-live-with — can-live-with.”

With half of her clients referred by lawyers and the other half referred by professionals and companies in the human resources field, Lieberman’s reputation for delivering results has spurred her business’s continued growth.

A well-known and highly respected alternative dispute resolution lawyer, Lieberman is a past chairman of the State Bar ADR section and serves as mediator for a number of organizations, including the Arizona Association of Realtors and varied government agencies. She also is a sought-after speaker and teacher on mediation and helps companies establish internal mediation programs.

The job can be emotionally taxing, admits Lieberman, and she looks forward to going home to her husband, Rick, son, Aaron, 15, and identical twin daughters, Claire and Elise, 14, at the end of the day. “But even when I’m exhausted there’s no better feeling than helping people resolve conflicts.”

Insight Employment Mediation is located at 21090 N. Pima Road, Scottsdale. Call (480) 246-3366 or visit www.insightemployment.com.

BRIEFS

Hats off or rather toques off to Sea Saw Chef and co-owner Nobuo Fukuda, who was named BEST CHEF IN THE SOUTHWEST by the James Beard Foundation. More than 400 food and beverage professionals around the country chose category winners based on their demonstration of consistent standards of excellence. The restaurant, which is currently located in the middle of downtown Scottsdale’s restaurant row, is moving across the street to SouthBridge, a retail development that will encompass restaurants and shops. Fukuda will also open Shell Shock, a restaurant designed to resemble a Japanese tavern in the same development early next year.

No good deed goes unrewarded. Leon Silver, a Scottsdale lawyer who founded Liberty Project, a think tank of law students and young lawyers, received the first “FABULOUS ATTORNEY ADVISOR” award from Arizona State University’s Sandra Day O’Connor College of Law in May. Since founding the Liberty Project in 2005, Silver continues to advise the group, which works to protect reproductive health through public policy, education and community awareness.

Be green with envy. Scottsdale Mayor Mary Manross accepted the Mayor’s Energy Leadership Award at the 18TH ANNUAL ENERGY EFFICIENCY FORUM on June 13 in Washington, D.C. She was among a group of leaders honored for their commitment to energy efficiency. The city of Scottsdale continues with its dedicated effort to adopt energy and design goals for municipal buildings.

Shining bright has never been easier for Jerry Bisgrove, chairman and chief executive officer of STARDUST COMPANIES. He was awarded the first Transformational Leader Award from the Arizona Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Stardust is a Scottsdale-based group comprised of the Stardust Real Estate Holdings and the Stardust Foundation. The company, dedicated to the community, strives toward its mission — “to be a catalyst for building stable neighborhoods, through active involvement.” Among the many reasons why Bisgrove was chosen for the award range from his leadership in creating a vision for positive change in public policy and his efforts to improve the lives of low-income families. The award will be given annually to a community leader with similar ideals.

Memorable dog stories wanted. The second annual Dog Days of August contest begins Aug. 1. Enter to help your favorite Arizona animal charity and for the chance to win a professional oil painting of your pet by Linda Budge of CAVE CREEK-BASED LINDA BUDGE STUDIO. The painting will be valued at $2,300. To enter, submit a color photograph of your dog and a 500- to 700-word essay on a laughable moment in its life. The $25 entry fee check needs to be made payable to the entrant’s favorite animal charity. For information, call 599-9985.