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## **President's Message**

Hon. Linda Fidnick



This is my final AFCC President's Message before I turn the gavel over to my wonderful and capable successor, Professor Stacey Platt. I want to thank all AFCC members for your support and encouragement over the past year as we slowly move from the days filled with COVID apprehension toward what I hope will ultimately be a long period of health and prosperity for all.

Since last July, I have had many exceptional opportunities to represent AFCC. I participated in the AFCC Symposium on Child Custody in Las Vegas (record setting attendance!). I was honored to present a session at the annual conference of our "sister" organization, the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFJC), and to attend the annual Forum of the International Academy of Collaborative Professionals. In addition, I have been extensively involved in planning the AFCC-NCJFJC International Symposium on Family Court Reform, with judges from all over the world.

This is what I learned: AFCC is universally considered a preeminent leader in the world of family law. AFCC members are professionals who are engaged, thoughtful, energetic, and willing to work hard to assist the families that they see. Even when members of other organizations in the field aren't also AFCC members (and many are!) They are aware of what we do and consider us to be credible, yet visionary, willing to wade into controversial territory while preserving civil discourse, and ultimately the "go-to" resource.

In addition to learning more about how AFCC is perceived externally, I also learned much more about the inner workings of the association. In the last 12 months, AFCC sponsored two major conferences, twelve webinars, four additional DE&I webinars, three online training programs, published four issues of Family Court Review and twelve

issues of the AFCC eNEWS, approved the Guidelines for Parenting Plan Evaluations in Family Law Cases and the AFCC-NCJFCJ Statement on Parent-Child Contact Problems, appointed a task force to revise the Model Standards on Family and Divorce Mediation, upgraded the website, hired two new staff members, and answered hundreds of member inquiries, and that is just the tip of the iceberg.

None of this just happens. It is the result of AFCC volunteer leadership and members and the AFCC staff. I want to state, unequivocally, that there are none better. Our members provide countless hours volunteering their time and expertise so that all AFCC members and family court professionals have the tools available to provide services of the highest possible caliber. They are engaged, supportive, and an amazing resource for all of us. The editors of FCR, Barbara Babb, Marsha Kline Pruett, and Rob Cannon, not only turn out an amazing journal, but lead a group of dedicated second- and third-year law students in producing it on a quarterly basis.

Last, but by no means least, the AFCC staff makes the trains run on time for nearly 6,000 members. Did you get CEs for your last conference? Thank Ann Ordway, AFCC Program Director for leading the AFCC efforts for continuing education for lawyers, psychologists, PCs, social workers, and others. Did that last online training program or webinar run smoothly? Kelly Bienfang, Operations Administrator, and Patrick Sommer, Communications Coordinator, made those happen. Is the office responsive to your requests? That's probably our top-notch administrators, Abby Rebholz and Tanya Froh. That's not all they do of course, there is much, much, more. Dawn Holmes, Director of Operations, oversees this seamless operation and according to Executive Director Peter Salem, his job is to stay out of their way.

It takes decades to build this kind of reputation. Each one of you is to be credited for your role in it, whether you are a lawyer, clinician, researcher, mediator, court professional or judge. All of you working together – which is of course the hallmark of what AFCC does best – have created an organization of which you should be very proud.

Please come to Los Angeles in May for our 60th anniversary conference to celebrate and enjoy the fruits of those decades of AFCC's commitment to families and find your role in continuing this legacy.