

2020 TAM Board

Kimberly Sullivan, President

Kim Sullivan is a Director of Employee Relations and Dispute Resolution at VMware, a publicly traded tech company where she is helping the organization design and implement an alternative dispute resolution system for employees and managers. For over three years, Kim was the Director of the Conflict Management and Dispute Resolution Office for the University of Texas at Austin offering mediation and restorative justice practices to campus. After years as a litigator, Kim is passionate about mediation and restorative justice, because she has seen these collaborative processes transform conflict into breakthrough opportunities for organizations and improve participants' lives through empathetic and future-focused discussions. Kim studies and utilizes neuropsychology, mindfulness techniques, and interest-based negotiation theory in trainings and disputes to help parties deal with their root communication and conflict issues in a more holistic way.

Kim previously served as a federal tax and labor and employment attorney for the IRS Office of Chief Counsel and National Treasury Employees Union. She has extensive experience in employee relations, organizational effectiveness training, and alternative dispute resolution models. Kim has worked with a diverse group of employees, managers, and executives in federal, private, and academic sector settings including work in both unionized and non-unionized environments.

In addition to workplace disputes, Kim has mediated small claims, harassment prevention orders, employment discrimination, landlord tenant, divorce, property disputes, higher education conflicts, labor contract negotiation issues, construction and contractor issues, tax controversy, and business negotiation conflicts.

Kim is a graduate of UMASS Amherst and Yale Law School and is licensed to practice law in both Massachusetts and Texas. Before moving to Austin, Kim taught, coached, and practiced mediation with the Harvard Mediation Program. She is a Credentialed Distinguished Mediator with the Texas Mediator Credentialing Association and is active with the State Bar of Texas ADR section.

Mark Sims, President-Elect

Mark W. Sims is an attorney-mediator with offices in the Arboretum corridor at Austin, Texas. Mr. Sims worked exclusively as a mediator in family law and other areas of general civil litigation in Travis and Williamson Counties and in Central Texas for close to 20 years. Mr. Sims is a graduate of the University of Texas School of Law and has Finance and Marketing degrees from the McCombs School of Business at the University of Texas at Austin. He is a Credentialed Distinguished Mediator with the Texas Mediator Credentialing Association, a Fellow of the Texas Bar Foundation, and a Fellow in the Austin Bar Foundation. Mr. Sims, a CV Peer Review Rated Attorney, is President-Elect of the Texas Association of Mediators and is a member of the College of the State Bar of Texas. Mr. Sims was awarded the 2013 J. Chrys Dougherty Award by the Austin Bar Association in recognition of his volunteer efforts.

Meg Walker, Treasurer

Meg Walker has been the Treasurer since 2005. Elected to the TAM board in 2002, Meg served as Co-Chair of the 2004 Annual Conference. Meg is also the 2014 recipient of the Susanne C. Adams Award. She holds a J.D. from the University of Houston Law Center and a B.A. in Sociology from Tulane University. Meg began mediating at the Harris County DRC in 1994 and developed a mediation practice concentrating on family and CPS mediations. She worked with the late Judge Frank Evans and the Texas Empowerment Network to provide conflict resolution and peer mediation programs in juvenile justice settings. Meg was also the Director of Mediation Services for Texas Accountants and Lawyers for the Arts (TALA), where she gained expertise in nonprofit law and management. She is married to Craig Janek and they have a 17-year-old son, Walker.

Melissa Back McAlpine, Immediate Past President

Melissa is a true advocate of mediation and is the President/Owner of Back to Yes Mediation, LLC. Since the beginning of her career, Melissa has followed her passion and practices as a mediator, ADR Trainer and lecturer at Manousso Mediation & Arbitration, Adjunct Professor at the University of St. Thomas, and arbitrator. She is also a licensed attorney. Melissa is a long-time Texas Credentialed Distinguished Mediator, a Federal Contract mediator for the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), and a trainer and lecturer at Manousso Mediation & Arbitration, LLC. She is also on the panel of mediators for various District Court and County Court judges in the greater Houston area.

Melissa graduated from Rice University (with high honors), and subsequently earned her J.D. from the SMU Dedman School of Law. Her legal experience includes working at the international law firm of Jones Day in Munich, Germany, where she assisted in preparing bilingual cross-border international contracts. She is well-versed in intercultural and interpersonal communications, and is fluent in Spanish and German.

Melissa is married to Kiernan McAlpine, a board certified personal injury attorney and partner at the Daspit Law Firm in Houston. Upon special request, Melissa draws upon her experience in conflict resolution to assist her husband with jury selection. Above-all, Melissa is dedicated to helping parties find peace and move forward.

Omar Samji, Director

Omar Samji is a volunteer board member, trainer and mediator for the Aga Khan Conciliation and Arbitration Board (CAB), which is the alternative dispute resolution body of the Ismaili Muslim community. CAB provides community mediation services to resolve disputes typically where one or more parties is from the Ismaili Muslim faith. The CAB system operates in 19 countries around the world. In the United States, CAB handles over 200 cases per year, primarily in the family/matrimonial and business/commercial spheres. Omar is a member of

the Texas Association of Mediators and the Association of Conflict Resolution's Houston Chapter. He is also a member of the Board of Trustees of The Fay School and Board of Directors of Society for the Performing Arts Houston.

Amber Gong, Director

Amber Gong is a passionate conflict resolution advocate and mediator. She has a BA in International Cultural Studies: Peacebuilding from Brigham Young University: Hawaii where she received her mediation certification in transformative mediation. She has been involved in several projects including facilitating conflict escalation and de-escalation workshops and mediating parenting plans for intercultural couples. She spent a year and a half in South Korea working with locals to learn their language and culture, and has done extensive study on the Asia-Pacific region of the world. When she is not organizing trainings or working with volunteers for the Dispute Resolution Center of Montgomery County, Inc., she is heavily involved in her local organizations or preparing for the TAM Conference in 2021.

Daniel Martinez, Director

A South Texas native, Daniel D. Martinez, is an emerging voice in the field of alternative dispute resolution. Daniel believes that interpersonal conflict is an unavoidable attribute of the human condition. As a result, Daniel chooses to embrace moments of conflict as an ongoing series of opportunities to better understand one another.

Daniel is Senior Attorney and Deputy Liaison Counsel with Chavez Legal Group, Staff Counsel to Fred Loya Insurance. In his dual roles as both a litigator and business development liaison, Daniel works daily on troubleshooting and managing various conflicts between the Company, and Staff and Outside Counsel Attorneys around the nation.

Daniel has mediated real estate, family law, personal injury, and first-party property damage disputes. He has served as an Assistant Receiver in a complex partnership dissolution, and most recently, led a long-term facilitated dialogue between representatives of a municipality and various cyclist groups concerned about transportation safety. He is the youngest member of the Council for the Alternative Dispute Resolution Section of the State Bar, and helps to organize ADR Roadshows around Texas to promote and teach skills that aid in dispute resolution.

Daniel studied History and Political Science at Yale University, taught with Teach for America in Miami, Florida, and attended the Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law in New York City, where he attained a Certificate in Dispute Resolution.

When not in the office, you may find Daniel stalking redfish in the Laguna Madre or admiring his wife's artwork. Daniel is married to Jessica Monroe Martinez. Their son is three years old.

Mary Adams-Moe, Director

Mary has the ability to quickly understand and analyze complex problems and the wisdom to help opposing parties find the best possible solution to their dispute. Her law practice is wholly dedicated to mediation.

She is a Credentialed Advanced Mediator and has completed specialized training in divorce, elder care law, and intellectual property rights. She is a member of the Texas Association of Mediators, a board member of the Southwest Conflict Resolution Network and a member of the Collin, Dallas and Denton Bar. She is Licensed to practice law in Texas, Registered to practice before the United States Patent and Trademark Office, and Certified to practice Collaborative Law in Texas.

Mary received her law degree from the SMU Dedman Law School in 2005, and graduated cum laude from the University of North Texas in 1985 with a BS in physics.

Mary has a husband, three grown children and three grandchildren as well as a large extended family.

Angela Mitakidi, Director

Angela Mitakidis serves as adjunct faculty at the Center for Dispute Resolution and Conflict Management at Southern Methodist University. Angela teaches graduate courses in mediation & dispute resolution, family conflict dynamics, and gender & culture. Angela is also adjunct faculty for Abilene Christian University's conflict resolution program.

Prior to her work in Texas, Angela worked within the legal and dispute resolution fields in Singapore, where she resided for a number of years, and in her native South Africa, where she was an attorney. Angela has over 25 years' management experience in the legal and dispute resolution fields internationally. Angela has worked with high schools, locally and internationally, to train peer mediators and implement peer mediation programs. She is also a counseling student at SMU. She enjoys life coaching, and, together with her husband, Michael, provides pre-marital counseling.

Darcy Thompson, Director

Darcy Thompson, M.Ed., is a retired educator, experienced alternative dispute resolution (ADR) professional, Texas Association of Mediators (TAM) member, and Texas Mediator Credentialing Association Credentialed Advanced Mediator. She has mediated high conflict civil and church disputes. She has also successfully facilitated hundreds of challenging meetings among teachers, parents and professional staff during nearly thirty years in public education. Currently, Darcy is a member of several ADR organizations including TAM, the Montgomery County Dispute Resolution Center (advisory board); The Association for Conflict Resolution, Houston Chapter (advisory board); and the Texas Mediation Trainers Roundtable. Darcy's focus is in the areas of civil disputes and peer mediation training.

Danette Ross Watson, Director/Outreach Committee

Danette is TAM's Outreach Committee Chair and recently launched the West Texas Community Mediation Center in the city of Big Spring, located in Howard County, Texas! She has been mediating cases for nearly 25 years with an extensive background as a mediator, facilitator, consultant and trainer. She is a Distinguished Credentialated Mediator with the Texas Mediator Credentialing Association; Practitioner member of the Association for Conflict Resolution; member of the Texas Mediation Trainers Roundtable; a member and completed training with the Texas Association of Hostage Negotiators. She most recently completed Conflict Management training with Conflict Connections. Additionally, she is a Certified Mediator/Assessor with the Maryland Council for Dispute Resolution. Her areas of practice include: high-conflict family and domestic issues; workplace and EEO for federal agencies; and mental health care conflict management. Danette holds a master's degree in conflict resolution from Concordia College and University, and has received extensive training in various styles and practices of mediation.

Linda Gibson, Historian

TAM Historian, Linda Gibson is a TMCA Credentialated Advanced Mediator in Temple, TX. She holds a B.A. from Rice University, an M.Ed. from North TX University in Counseling and Student Services, and a J.D. from Baylor University School of Law. She is a former school teacher and guidance counselor.

As an employee of Legal Aid, Linda started the Bell County Bar Association's pro bono program for indigent citizens in 1994. She is currently an active volunteer mediator for both the Austin and McLennan County DRCs, earning a Dedicated Service Award from the McLennan County DRC in 2017.

Linda is a former President of TAM and has served on the TAM board for 22 of the 28 years she has been a TAM member, including 13 years as TAM's Newsletter Editor. She received the Susanne Adams Award in 2015.

Maggie Shahrestani, Newsletter Editor

Maggie is an attorney and mediator based in Austin, Texas. She serves as Associate General Counsel for a local Austin company, where she provides general legal advice on business and construction matters. She is a graduate of Princeton University, the University of Texas School of Law, and the LBJ School of Public Affairs. Maggie discovered mediation in graduate school and fell in love with the process of helping people see and hear one another more clearly. As of early April, she will be moving to her husband's firm, Shahrestani Law, where she will offer workplace and employment mediation, compliance check-ups, and legal counsel.

Melanie E. Grimes, TMCA Representative

Melanie is blessed with a private mediation practice in Dallas that includes both family and civil matters. She is a TMCA Credentialed Distinguished Mediator and has the honor to serve as TAM's representative to the Texas Mediator Credentialing Association's Board of Directors. Melanie served as Chair of the TMCA Board for three years from 2017 to 2019 and currently serves as the Board's Vice-Chair, Credentialing. In 2018, she received TAM's Susanne C. Adams Award and has also been honored with the Louis Weber Award for "Outstanding Mediator of the Year" for her work as a volunteer mediator.

Fran Brochstein, Membership Chair

Fran is Membership Chair for the coming year. She has been a licensed attorney in Texas since 1991. She took her first basic mediation training in 2004 and has been mediating since 2005. Last year, Fran moved from Houston to Marble Falls. She now belongs to many mediation professional groups. If anyone has any questions about TAM, they should feel free to call or email Fran!

Sara A. Davis Lorenzi, Social Media Chair

Previously in 2016 & 2017, Sara held position on the Board for The American Marketing Association, as Membership Chair for AMA Houston. Now as a TAM Member, Sara joins the TAM Board of Directors as Social Media Chair. She is building TAM's reach with creative branding on Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn. Sara is a Credentialed Mediator, TMCA and has served as a Mediator for the DRC Montgomery County as well as volunteered, in 2019, to expand the Social Media reach for DRC-MC. Now in 2020, Sara provides Social Media development for those in the Legal profession.