

DID YOU KNOW?
WHEN & WHY TAFM BECAME TAM

by Linda Gibson, TAM Historian

For the first five years of our organization's existence, we were known as the Texas Association of Family Mediators. In 1990, we dropped "Family" from our name and became the Texas Association of Mediators. This was much more significant than merely a simple name change. It was a total change in strategic direction for our organization. We stopped being an association exclusively serving Texas family law mediators and opened our membership and our focus to all mediators throughout the State.

The President of TAFM at the time was Florence M. Kusnetz, who considered the TAFM/TAM name change "the most significant accomplishment of [her] year as president." Florence and other founders of TAFM had turned to mediation in the early 1980s as a way to make the process of getting a divorce a better, less caustic experience for their clients. She said, "From the first divorce mediation I did, I realized that this was the most civilized thing I could do for my clients. Keeping emotionally distraught, frightened, and angry people out of court benefited everyone, especially the children involved."

By 1990, it had become clear to Florence and others that mediation was a better means of resolving not only family law disputes, but also employer/employee, landlord/tenant, neighborhood, commercial, consumer, and many other types of disputes. There were already programs for neighborhood mediation, labor mediation, and even farm/banker mediation; however, there was no statewide organization for all mediators. The TAFM leadership wanted TAM to be that organization. Florence stated, "We realized in order to be effective in promoting mediation we had to be inclusive and grow with the field."

Since its inception, our organization had been inclusive in that it had always welcomed members from diverse professional backgrounds. We were not limited to lawyers or mental health professionals or members of the clergy. We were open to anyone who had been trained to help couples resolve their family law disputes via mediation. Now, in 1990, we were opening our membership to include ALL neutrals in Texas who used their mediation skills to help their clients find acceptable solutions to a myriad of disputes.