

VERDICTS & SETTLEMENTS

FRIDAY, JANUARY 8, 2021

Calm Character

Neutral Ted Andrews finds great fulfillment in helping broken families pick up the pieces.

By Shane Nelson
Special to the Daily Journal

Mediator Ted Andrews spent two decades working as a human resources attorney in the corporate world before transitioning to his current focus on resolving family disputes.

“Emotionally, human resources is very similar to family law,” he said. “A lot of people’s work families are much closer to them than their actual families.”

Andrews worked for 10 years helping United Parcel Service employees navigate the interpersonal challenges of their work families before moving on to American Building Maintenance, where he spent another decade in HR before deciding to make a change five years ago and to focus full time on mediation work.

“The venue’s changed a little, and the rules behind it are different,” Andrews said, contrasting family law with his earlier career in corporate HR. “But the emotions and people’s expectations are pretty similar.”

Today, Andrews helps litigants through difficult challenges such as divorce, child custody, parenting plans and support matters as well as finance, debt and asset divisions.

“There’s such a tremendous need for families today to have a pathway to a peaceful after-divorce life,” he said.

Andrews went through his own divorce several years ago, an experience he described as “emotionally traumatic,” and he said that shaped his approach to mediation.

“There’s always one person that wants it less,” Andrews said of divorce. “People are processing that; they’re going at different speeds. Someone made up their mind before the other. ... Sometimes it’s about helping the later party come up to speed. Often, they think they’re going to fix it, and often that’s not the case. So it’s about helping them understand, ‘Let’s work something out that’s going to work for you if it doesn’t get better.’”

Los Angeles trial attorney and mediator Sidney K. Kanazawa, who has co-mediated a number of matters with Andrews, said many of his best dispute resolution attributes are immediately apparent.

“Ted is probably one of the calmest and kindest people I know,” Kanazawa said. “And along with that calmness, he exudes this concern for others and a willingness and optimism that makes you just feel like, ‘We’re going to get this done.’”

Kanazawa said family law litigants frequently feel hopeless and powerless, a combination which leads individuals to become defensive, and he explained that Andrews’ calm



Nicole Tyau / Daily Journal photo

nature and positivity go a long way in diffusing those hostile emotions.

“If you have somebody that’s negative, that’s judgmental, that gets excited, all that makes people feel more worried and more concerned, and they clam up or attack,” Kanazawa said. “Those qualities of calmness and caring and optimism are probably the most important characteristics to help people come together, and Ted just naturally has that.”

Andrews noted that he prefers to begin mediations with all parties present, if possible, and he said that helps him develop a feel for the dynamic between litigants.

“Sometimes there also needs to be a translator between parties,” Andrews added. “People

Ted Andrews

Intrepid Dispute Resolution,
Sierra Madre

Areas of specialty:
Family law

say things, and the other party may not be able to hear it because they’re so deep into their conflict story, or they’re so hurt they can’t hear what the other person’s trying to say. ... Sometimes it helps both parties to see what the other party is trying to say.”

Andrews won’t hesitate to separate folks, however, if needed, and he said Zoom has been a tool he’s enjoyed using throughout the pandemic, thanks in

large part to the flexibility of the platform and its ability to reduce tension between litigants.

“I’ve found that when people come into an office, or they’re in a conference room, it’s very stressful – they’re not in their comfort zone,” he explained. “With Zoom, they’re in a comfortable spot, and they have the ability to think and consider how they want things to be. They’re out of that emotional spot we often find ourselves in when we’re face to face with people or even if they’re in caucus and they’re in the next room.”

As the pandemic has worsened, Andrews said he’s seen a growing logjam in divorce cases, and worries about money are the leading cause.

“People might want to get a divorce, but if both spouses now don’t have a job, the amount of chaos that’s been entered into this equation is beyond belief,” he explained. “It’s much more difficult to calculate child support or alimony or any of these things if people’s employment is gone or it’s changed. ... How do you plan for the next 20 years

if the next six months is just in chaos?”

In contrast, Andrews said he’s been especially busy lately working on a pro bono basis with Southern California Family Mediation for Los Angeles County’s child dependency courts.

“I think there’s a lot of people under pressure at home with their kids,” he said of the increase in his child dependency work. “And I think this is unbelievably difficult on so many people.”

Andrews expects the surge in child dependency matters to increase further after schools reopen.

“Right now, a lot of people don’t see other people,” he explained. “Often, child abuse is reported by teachers, counselors, coaches. I don’t think kids have access to that outlet now, which is sad.”

Los Angeles divorce attorney and mediator Lynette S. Kim, who has co-mediated many child dependency cases with Andrews, described him as a great mediator.

“Ted certainly has empathy

and a lot of patience,” Kim said. “And he has an ability to discuss these issues in a way parents can understand and absorb.”

Kim explained that the child dependency mediation work she’s tackled with Andrews often involves arranging visitation schedules, which can in some cases be extraordinarily challenging and require all-day sessions.

“We’re dealing with families that are broken, and they’re trying to reassemble the pieces,” she said. “Some of these cases are really tough, and there are a lot of emotions involved.”

Sara Campos, the associate director at the Loyola Center for Conflict Resolution, where Andrews has mediated a range of divorce matters, also described him as a terrific neutral.

“He’s always very positive, and I think parties who are in conflict really appreciate that,” she said. “Ted really helps people to focus on their needs and interests and getting through the process in the least acrimonious way. He just always turns negatives into positives.”

Andrews, who grew up in Michigan and completed his degree at the University of Cincinnati College of Law in 1996, said he became an attorney because he thought the career would allow him to help people solve their problems. And today, working with divorced individuals so children can have both parents in their lives is something the mediator said he finds especially rewarding.

“The only way that’s possible is if the parents are able to agree on a parenting plan, and they’re able to find some level of peace in their relationship,” he explained. “I really take a lot of fulfillment out of helping people do that.”

Here are some attorneys who have worked with Andrews: Alexa R. Bicos, Los Angeles Dependency Lawyers; Janet S. Grundfest, Daley & Sacks, Law RLLP; Lynette S. Kim, Kim Mediation & Law Center; Sidney K. Kanazawa, Alternative Resolution Centers; Sara Campos, Loyola Center for Conflict Resolution.