



The Debate about Trees

By Andrew Kidde

Trees are not generally the stuff of splashy headlines. Yet, since we last wrote on the subject in May of 2002, trees have been making news. The Hanukkah Eve Windstorm of 2006 toppled massive trees causing an estimated \$170 million in insured damages and killing 5 people in the region (even more died in the aftermath). Meanwhile, the problem of global warming has increasingly been making news, and along with it reports about the importance of trees as regulators of the atmosphere. It seems that trees have become both our killers and our saviors. Talk about selling copy...

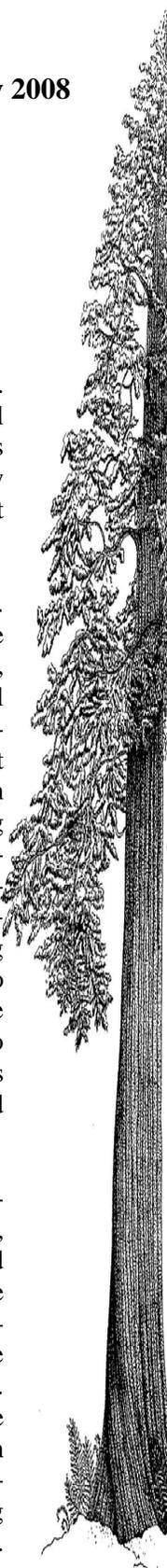
Tree crimes have also been making the news; a resident of Nevada is serving a 5 year prison term for cutting down 500 trees to improve his view of the Las Vegas strip. Now his view is framed by prison bars. Here in Bellevue, while officials are not poised to throw anyone in the slammer for illegally cutting down trees, they are taking the matter more seriously. A few months ago City officials began legal action against a builder who destroyed or damaged 31 trees on City property. The City was seeking triple damages (a city ordinance adopted in the 90's allows for triple damages in tree "trespass" cases). Last year City Council also adopted an ordinance that requires those tearing down and redeveloping houses on single family lots to retain 30% of significant trees. Other tree preservation regulations may be in the works.

All this recent news about trees has only increased fears and inflamed passions of those who call the mediation program with concerns related to trees. Many callers are fearful of trees crashing onto their houses; we also get calls about trees that are blocking views or shading gardens or choking gutters with their leaves. When we contact the owners of these offending trees we find that many of them

love their trees, the bigger and grander the better. For many, trees are among the most beautiful things in the world. And all of the new awareness of the importance of trees in the environment only adds fuel to their conviction that these trees must be preserved.

Trees are an important factor in the environment. Their role in trapping carbon from the atmosphere makes them key regulators of the atmosphere. Yet, they are not our silver bullet in combating global warming. As noted on the Utah State Forestry extension website, "tree planting in the U.S. can not make a significant dent in absorbing the carbon dioxide we release." Containing global warming will require multiple strategies, and reducing energy demand is probably an important one. Interestingly, trees are quite helpful in conserving energy. Trees planted such that they shade a building can reduce energy use for air conditioning by up to 70%. Trees placed to slow the wind can reduce energy use for heating by 30%. And trees are also important tools other environmental goals, such as erosion control and storm water management, and providing habitat for a host of creatures.

Statistically speaking, falling trees are not a significant killer. According to a study done in the UK, we are 600 times more likely to be killed in a road accident than by a falling tree. And we are more likely to be killed by a bolt of lightning than a falling tree. Yet, as we saw in the Hanukkah Eve windstorm, our local evergreens can be lethal. Global warming may well cause an increase in the number and severity of these wind storms; and in our region we have many massive trees with relatively shallow roots. Indeed, our risk from falling trees may be higher than in other parts of the world. Since the wind storm, local arborists have been



concentrating on the question of tree risk assessment, a whole field unto itself. Concerns about the safety hazard posed by a specific tree can be referred to an arborist who has specialized training in tree risk assessment.

Expert advice can be very helpful to shape the perspectives of parties in tree disputes. And here at the Bellevue Neighborhood Mediation Program we often refer clients to tree experts or provide basic information on tree law. (Please contact us at 425-452-4091 if you would like any of this tree information.) However, even with all the best expert guidance, differences between neighbors will remain in some cases.

Trees just do inspire strong feelings. The backyard tree becomes as loved as a family heirloom; or for a downwind neighbor, as threatening as an armed robber lurking in the alley. Eventually a decision needs to be made about whether a tree must come down. And in getting to that decision, a forum like mediation, which promotes understanding and respect of the feeling of both parties, can make all the difference. Having a dialogue about these underlying feelings can allow the neighbors who must make these decisions to continue living together in a spirit of neighborhood harmony.

Come learn more about Trees at our in-service with City Arborists on Tuesday May 13th at 6:00 PM in Room 1E-120

Trees in History

Trees are the world's oldest living things. "Methuselah," a bristlecone pine, is thought to be the oldest – it germinated about 5000 years ago, in the early years of the ancient Egyptian empire. Trees have always played significant roles in the human drama. In the middle ages, the English used a particular part of the yew tree, where the springy sapwood meets the strong heartwood, to make their powerful longbows -- a technological innovation that allowed them to crush the French at Agincourt. Sitting under a peepul tree in the 6th century BCE, Prince Siddhartha received enlightenment and went on to found a major world religion espousing peace and tranquility. So, it is not surprising that trees play a dramatic role in the lives of our citizens. After all, t'was ever so.



Book Group Corner:



By Barb Miller

In March we read *A Human Being Died That Night*, by South African writer Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela. Ms. Gobodo-Madikizela is a psychologist and was a member of

South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The core of the book is an account of her interviews with Eugene de Kock, the notorious death squad leader for Apartheid. She interviewed de Kock while he was serving time in high-security prison. Some time before de Kock had asked to meet with the widows of three black policemen who had died at his hands. Ms. Gobodo-Madikizela was particularly intrigued when she had heard that those widows after meeting with de Kock felt that he "had communicated to them something he felt deeply and had acknowledged their pain..."

Ms. Gobodo-Madikizela's larger goal is to explore the possibility of forgiveness in the face of immensely evil acts. She considers arguments for and against such forgiveness. She includes vivid descriptions by vic-

tim's families of some of de Kock's horrific violent acts. Yet these descriptions provide the context for the most remarkable aspect of the book, in which she explores her own reactions to de Kock as she encounters him in a series of meetings and discovers in herself empathy for this killer whose deep remorse for his acts she believes to be sincere. Important to her view of forgiveness is the distinction drawn between the acts, which cause immeasurable suffering for which no reparation is possible, and the person who, in committing those acts, has denied his common humanity with the victims, and who, in seeking forgiveness, asks to be readmitted to the human family. It is the human capacity for empathy, to want to reach out and relieve the suffering of another human in pain, that the author sees at the heart of the act of forgiveness.

Next meeting: Wednesday, May 14 at 5:30 p.m. at City Hall. We will be reading *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience* by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi.

Parent—Teen Update

By
Cathy Goldman

May is a busy month for our program as I am preparing for the upcoming parent-teen mediation training which will take place the last week of June. I have set up recruiting meetings at the high schools in Bellevue. At each school, staff invites 9th grade students to attend an informational session during lunch. At that meeting I explain the program and encourage the students to apply. Many teen mediators presently in the program come help me present. A big “thanks” to those who help with recruiting!



In April, we presented to the Latino community. Thanks to Liz Sanchez and Marika Strauss for presenting communication skills to parents who speak Spanish. The parents were eager to have some new ways to interact with their teens.

Our next in-service training will take place on Wednesday June 4th, from 6 to 8pm at **Bellevue City Hall**. This in-service is designed for those who will be helping with the June training. I will go over the process of coaching and presenting. If you plan to help with the training, please plan to attend!

Thanks for your continued dedication to the program!

BNMP Training Opportunities For Mediators and Conciliators

Neighborhood In-services:

City Arborists on Tree Disputes

Dan Dewald and Tom McFarlane
Tues May 13th at 6:00 PM in Room 1E-120
6:00 Refreshments, 6:30-8:30 Program

Mediating with Lawyers in the Room.

Marilyn Endriss
Tues June 17th at 6:00 PM in Room 1E-120
6:00 Refreshments, 6:30-8:30 Program

Parent Teen In-Service:

Training for Training Assistants

Cathy Goldman
Weds June 4th, from 6-8 PM Room 1E-112

Trainings:

Parent Teen Mediation Training—

June 24th—28th.
Contact Cathy Goldman 425-452-4091 for more information

Book Group:

Wednesday, May 14 at 5:30 p.m. at City Hall.
We will be reading *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience* by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi.

Con/Med Consultation Group:

Join us to discuss your current conciliations/mediations or questions. Great networking and learning opportunity. Open to all volunteers.
June 11th at 5:30 in Room 1E-118

Program Staff:

Program Co-Manager:	Cheryl Cohen	-	452-5222
Program Co-Manager:	Andrew Kidde	-	452-5288
Program Assistant	Gwen Jones	-	452-2897
Parent-Teen Coordinator:	Cathy Goldman	-	452-4091

City of Bellevue website: <http://www.bellevuewa.gov>
(Look for the Mediation Program under “Neighborhood Information”)

Volunteer Profile:

Alison Uppendahl



Alison has volunteered with the Bellevue Parent Teen Mediation Program for the last three years. She joined the program to gain experience working with families, especially teens, with family communication and dynamics. A recent graduate from Bellevue Community College Alcohol and Drug Counseling Program, she has worked for a local not-for-profit group counseling adolescents struggling with drug and alcohol issues. Originally from Oregon, she and her husband of 20 years, have two children ages 15 and 12. She enjoys the mediation program, the training, working with the teen mediators and meeting families in need of setting goals.



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