

# The Dispute Resolution Center of Thurston County's 2021 Peacemaker Award Honors Shelly Willis and Mary Fairhurst

[thurstontalk.com/2021/07/10/the-dispute-resolution-center-of-thurston-countys-2021-peacemaker-award-honors-shelly-willis-and-mary-fairhurst/](https://thurstontalk.com/2021/07/10/the-dispute-resolution-center-of-thurston-countys-2021-peacemaker-award-honors-shelly-willis-and-mary-fairhurst/)

July 10, 2021

[!\[\]\(666e09182d4cd268646ea700ea60dcdf\_img.jpg\) Facebook](#) [!\[\]\(1ef1ef0bf9af6c6996401964cf280f2d\_img.jpg\) Tweet](#) [!\[\]\(e9a80c8557f9285916925bd4ac40fff5\_img.jpg\) Pin](#)

Mary Fairhurst and Shelly Willis are the joint recipients of the Evan Ferber Peacemaker Award by the [Dispute Resolution Center](#) of Thurston County. Both are shining lights and beacons of peace and hope within our community and beyond. Their lives exemplify that peace and justice begin with the individual, and then offer inspiration to others. With vision and commitment, both women lead and act. They walk their talk. Our community is grateful for their years of service and contribution.



## Shelly Willis

"I stand on the shoulders of many others," says Shelly. Since she was a student, she has wanted to make a difference. Her motto is "It's less expensive to raise healthy children than to mend broken adults." She believes in investing time, education and support into the youngest who grow up to be great community members, parents and co-workers.

For more than 20 years Shelly has been the executive director of [Family Education and Support Services](#) (FESS). She founded the agency and has built a team of more than 30 professionals who work with families to provide support, educational classes, trauma care, addiction treatment, employment assistance and basic needs such as clothing, food and shelter. Her career has been spent engendering peace and stability in the lives of families in our community.

A recent move to a larger facility offers a wide variety of programs and services, such as Dry Tikes & Wet Wipes: no cost access to diapers



Peacemaker Award recipient Shelly Willis invests her time and energies into our community. Photo courtesy: Dispute Resolution Center

and baby care products. Over the years, Shelly's efforts have helped families eliminate suffering and conflict and to weather tough times.

"Service, life-building, peacemaking – they have been such a part of her DNA as she has grown FESS one program at a time, into an organization that give so much to so many," notes former board member Bob Partlow. "Shelly is part of the undefinable glue that bonds and binds a community together. She is truly the example of one person making a difference."

## Mary Fairhurst

---

"It's truly an honor to receive this award," says Mary. "I know Evan Ferber, who is a wonderful leader." For years, Mary has taught about civility and peacemaking. "It is important we see and hear people so we can work together to create loving and caring environments where people can be peaceful and care for each other," adds Mary. She is grateful to the Dispute Resolution Center for all the work it has done and continues to do.

Mary served on the Washington State Supreme Court for 16 years and retired as the Chief Justice. She committed her life to education in order to build the public's trust, confidence and engagement in the justice system. Enhancing opportunities for women and minorities is important to her.

"Mary's approach to her work and volunteer efforts is always to treat all individuals with dignity and respect, recognizing that every single act is an opportunity to make a difference, one act at a time," notes Mary Sue Wilson, her nominator.

"Mary believes in miracles, she expects them, and she experiences them," says Bill Christie, family friend. He also recognizes Mary's love for the law, and its application. Mary is appreciated for her good humor and generous giving of her time and talents. "She has wisdom, experience and knowledge," says her sister Tori Fairhurst.



Now retired, former Chief Justice Mary Fairhurst kept attention on learning civility and peace making. Photo courtesy: TVW



Retired Chief Justice Mary Fairhurst visits the Capitol and displays her 'Pose of Joy,' appreciating all life has to offer. Photo credit: Ryan B. Adams

## A Calming Voice

---

For 30 years, the Dispute Resolution Center has served residents of Thurston and south Mason Counties through a variety of resources to individuals, families, businesses, organizations and the broader community. This helps them manage and resolve conflict, prevent conflict when possible, and create a more civil and peaceful community. In 2020 the DRC served 4,000 members of our community through its services, which are now all available online, including:

- Mediation: Trained and certified mediators serve as impartial facilitators to help people in conflict work toward mutually beneficial agreements.
- Eviction Resolution: Facilitates dialogue and negotiation between landlords and tenants impacted by the COVID pandemic.
- Conflict Resolution Resource Line: Provides conflict coaching, information and referrals, and arrange face-to-face mediations.
- Group Facilitation: Helps work teams and other groups run orderly and productive meetings and achieve key goals.
- Training: Provides customized training to businesses and organizations to prevent and manage workplace conflict, promote teamwork and improve customer service
- Youth Empowerment & School Support: Partners with local schools to offer training and support to help the next generation communicate through conflict

The Evan Ferber Peacemaker Award is normally presented at the DRC's annual April fundraising event, The Toast. Unfortunately, due to COVID, it was not held in 2021 for the second year in a row. This year's award presentation will take place at the annual DRC Volunteer Picnic on August 18. That outdoor event will be the first time our volunteers will have gathered in-person in two years. For more information, visit the [Dispute Resolution Center webpages](#).

### **Dispute Resolution Center**

2604 12th Court SW, Suite A-2, Olympia  
Conflict Resolution Resource line  
360.956.1155



Shelly Willis of the Family Education and Support Services gets to perform annually with the band STYX for fun fundraising. Photo courtesy: FESS