

MAGIC NUMBER



Nicole LaCour Young/The Mississippi Press

Daryl Francis, right and Richard Dodge, left, participants in the Mississippi Mediation Project listen as Laurel Kauffer, founder of the Project speaks to Moss Point Mayor Xavier Bishop and a group of project participants in front of a shelf of mediation-related books donated to the Moss Point Public Library by the Project.

Project donates largest collection of mediation books in state to Ina Thompson Library

BY AMBER CRAIG

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MOSS POINT — The Mississippi Mediation Project concluded the final day of its conflict resolution session Wednesday by dedicating a section of mediation books to the Ina Thompson Public Library in Moss Point.

The three-day conference organized by the non-profit organization brought top mediation experts from across the nation to Pelican Landing, where 30 people from Jackson, Harrison and Hancock counties learned problem-solving skills.

Laurel Kauffer, the project's

founder, called the Essential Problem Solving Skills workshop a success.

"It was beyond my expectations," Kauffer said.

Kauffer, who traveled to Moss Point from her home in Los

Angeles, said this particular group was exceptional, because there

was no attrition in the attendance. The number of people actually grew after the first day, Kauffer said.

"After the first day, people



Bishop

called their co-workers and bosses and said, 'You have to come to this,'" Kauffer said.

Kauffer said the shelf of 40 books was donated to the project from publishers and some authors Kauffer personally knows, and her goal was to donate the largest collection of mediation books in the state.

After some work, Kauffer said she found that a library in Jackson had 38, so she knew she wanted to beat that number. "I knew 38 was my magic number," she said during the dedication.

Mayor Xavier Bishop said

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Donation

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mediation is an important skill for the Gulf Coast, calling post-Hurricane Katrina stress an often-ignored "epidemic" in the area.

"The epidemic is stress and tension and anxiety that tend to be negative and manifest themselves in anger," Bishop said.

Anita Reddix-Augustin, a participant from Vancleave, said the workshop was challenging and fast-paced,

Reddix-Augustin, a state-certified instructor, said after three days of lectures, dialogues, question and answer sessions and role playing, she and her fellow classmates learned a great deal.

"We all met the challenge," she said.

Jeannie Goff, a school counselor at Singing River Elementary, said the training is especially important for her in the education field, and she plans on

applying the lessons in active listening and nonverbal communication at her job.

"I think we need more conflict resolution in our schools," Goff said.

Kauffer said her team will return for another basic course in April and an advanced course this summer.

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