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When Love Thy Neighbor Fails, Try Mediation

BY ALICE V. GALLAGHER

The admonition "Love Thy Neighbor" is simple—if your neighbor happens to be a saint. If not, you may suffer the fate of Berkeley resident Virginia. Her neighbor's yard rivaled the city dump while he pounded out decibels of noise. Virginia's handwritten notes of disapproval sometimes came back with vaguely obscene comments.

Carter gave his neighbors a different kind of fit. In the midst of his home construction, Carter got his neighbors' approval to use their driveway for dumptruck access. After the job stalled from weeks into months, they were ready to scream foul.

What to do with this wrath?

There is now something better than revenge. Both disputes were resolved through mediation organized and conducted by the Berkeley Dispute Resolution Service, a local volunteer organization that offers an alternative to the "animosity and legal battles that such neighbor-neighbor disagreement sometimes have," noted Executive Director Laura Bresler.

BDRS offers its service to all residents, merchants, landlords and tenants of the Berkeley/Albany communities.

"If both parties agree to try mediation, BDRS sets up a time and neutral place for the mediation, and arranges for three trained mediators to be on hand

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Kathe Zenach

