

DAILY REPORT

Bridging the Gap: How JAMS Neutrals Use ADR Skills to Strengthen Communities

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June 5, 2025

For neutral mediators and arbitrators who provide alternative dispute resolution (ADR) services, listening is a superpower, neutrality is second nature and problem-solving is part of the job description.

JAMS' Atlanta-based neutrals and professionals dedicate those same valuable qualities to their community-based and philanthropic work. From serving on nonprofit boards to leading initiatives that bring hope and healing to communities well beyond the legal field, JAMS neutrals and associates contribute meaningfully through service and volunteer leadership, strengthening the local nonprofit landscape.

Whether it's in the boardroom, the courtroom or the virtual meeting room, **JAMS** professionals bring the same thoughtful, collaborative spirit to every table they sit at because they simply want to "do good."

At JAMS, the phrase "**we do good**" is a way of life. Inspired by founder **Warren Knight**, who believed deeply in the power of dispute resolution to bring about meaningful change, this ethos has become



a defining part of JAMS' culture nationwide. This culture of service is further reflected in the **JAMS Foundation**, which Knight founded in 2002 and is now the world's largest private funder of conflict prevention and dispute resolution initiatives.

While JAMS neutrals across the country are deeply committed to weaving service and philanthropy into their lives, a few JAMS Atlanta neutrals share examples and stories of how ADR skills translate into powerful tools for community impact.

Communicating and Listening With Purpose

For Atlanta-based JAMS neutral **Joseph Loveland**, a former litigator who has served on the **Southern Center for Human Rights** Executive Board, the mindset shift from advocate to listener has transformed the way he serves nonprofits. “Since joining JAMS, it’s caused me to approach meetings and decision-making much more as a listener and someone who tries to find common ground,” he said.

This inclination to listen and facilitate has clear benefits in philanthropic work. **Hon. Gail Tusan**, a JAMS neutral and founder of the **Pave Foundation**, says her training as a judge and mediator deeply informs her community engagement. “The tendency to listen actively to all voices and try to facilitate agreement is heavily influenced by my experience as a neutral,” she explained. Whether she’s leading her nonprofit or moderating congregational meetings at her church, the retired Fulton County Superior Court judge says she relies on ADR skills to identify sources of conflict, resolve misunderstandings and maintain alignment with core values.

As neutrals often do, JAMS’ panelists began their professional journeys as attorneys — meaning they are advocates skilled in persuasion, logic and, above all, storytelling. Compelling narratives are often the most effective way to be heard and to make complex issues resonate. That skill hasn’t been left behind. Whether guiding a mediation or speaking to a room full of community members, storytelling remains a powerful tool for building understanding, fostering empathy and moving people toward resolution.

David Zacks, a longtime mediator, believes storytelling is one of the most effective tools in both conflict resolution and community building. He served as the **American Cancer Society** national chair and now spends his free time telling stories

with dementia patients at respite care centers in Atlanta. He makes up stories about “Chubby Tom,” a character he developed when his own kids were little, about a boy who is bullied. “Every story tells a moral,” he said. “Storytelling can play a big part in helping people see other perspectives.”

Dispute Resolution to Build Consensus

For **Bernard Taylor**, a JAMS neutral and national board chair of the U.S. Committee for **UNICEF**, the connection between ADR and philanthropy is seamless. “My work as a neutral has helped me see how to navigate complex issues in philanthropic work.” Whether addressing antisemitism through the **Anti-Defamation League** or providing aid to children in conflict zones, Taylor said his ADR background helps him guide people through emotional, often polarizing issues to reach shared understanding and action.

Hon. Beverly Martin volunteers with Los Angeles-based **Homeboy Industries**, which assists individuals reentering society after incarceration. As a federal judge, she saw firsthand the impact on families and defendants when handing down prison sentences. Now, she uses her neutral experience to support these families. “It’s all about solving problems,” she said. “The quicker we can help people resolve legal problems, the faster they can move on with their lives.”

Loveland says his JAMS experience was key when he found himself in a mediation on behalf of the Southern Center for Human Rights over county jail conditions during the COVID-19 pandemic. “My work as a mediator helped me see things from a different perspective and ultimately helped bridge the gaps to find a meaningful resolution.”

Diversity Yields Empathy

Exposure to people from all walks of life — a daily reality for mediators — has also shaped

how these neutrals approach inclusion in their volunteer roles. Tusan notes that the diversity she encounters in her ADR work makes it easy to engage donors, volunteers and constituents from different backgrounds. Taylor agrees: “What I’ve learned as a mediator has helped me craft resolutions in situations that require empathy, perspective and cultural awareness.”

The relationship goes both ways. Working closely with communities facing hardship has made many neutrals more compassionate and perceptive in their mediation practice. Taylor notes, “People really want to get to the right result. Even without resources, there’s an instinct to find resolution. I try to tap into that instinct in my work as a mediator.”

Martin echoes this idea: “If one side were 100% right and the other 100% wrong, I wouldn’t be seeing the case. Conflict comes from valid points of view on both sides.”

Why should more neutrals get involved in community-based work? According to these professionals, it just makes sense.

“We’ve developed unique skills,” said Taylor. “We spend our time figuring out what the real issue is, what’s important to people and how to help them reach compromise. That’s incredibly valuable in the nonprofit world.”

Zacks agrees: “A big dispute? Sit on your tongue and just listen. Let people run out of steam. Then find the way forward.”

For Tusan, it’s about more than resolving conflicts. “If you find the right project or the right organization you feel passionate about, it just feels like what we all should want to do. And the ADR skill set makes you even more valuable to the cause.”

Martin summed it up this way: “At the end, it’s not about what you have. It’s about the lives you’ve touched — and those that have touched you. It’s a privilege to do this work, in both ADR and in the community.”

L. Joseph Loveland, Jr. serves as a mediator and arbitrator in a wide range of complex disputes, including matters involving commercial contracts, real estate limited partnerships, distributor and supplier agreements, construction contracts, joint ventures and securities claims.

Judge Beverly B. Martin (Ret.) is an arbitrator, mediator, special master/referee and neutral evaluator at JAMS handling complex disputes, with a focus on federal, appellate, business and commercial, employment, bankruptcy, insurance and product liability matters.

Bernard Taylor, Sr. is a former police investigator in Detroit, a lawyer with almost 40 years of trial experience, a fellow of the American College of Trial Lawyers and a JAMS mediator and arbitrator.

Hon. Gail S. Tusan (Ret.) is an arbitrator and mediator with JAMS, focused on commercial contracts, real estate disputes, distributor/supplier agreements, family business and family law matters, FLSA issues, employment contracts, and discrimination and civil rights cases.

David M. Zacks, Esq., is a mediator at JAMS focusing on health care industry disputes, catastrophic personal injury matters and business/commercial disputes.

