



## Green Mountain Self-Advocates Board Meeting

1/25/2016 - 9:30am to 12:30pm

Our Lady of Angels Church, Randolph, VT



**Officers (3):** Levi Gardner, Lori Jones, Raymond Gordon.

**Board Members (9):** Tesha Tibidou, Conor Cleveland, Cristy Golec, Erik Johnson, Kaiya Andrews, Beverly Williams, Linda Monette, Craig Davis, Danielle Viau.

**Self-Advocates(22):** Adam Motzert, Josh Dumias, Cy Trombley, Marylin Shank, Debbie Demars, Doreen Mason, Daisy Emerson, Lisa Smedey, Jeremy Chaim, Antoine Polgar, Patti Grassetto, Mary LaFountain, Lorna Merrill, Margarie Burns, Michelle Habern, Kris Medina, Robert Martin II, Hillary Christian, Lehanna Guyette, Amethyst Crowe, Vicki Upham, Marc Preman.

**Allies (16):** Karen Noone, Danielle Cote, Edward Thorndike, Paul Tidyman, Paula Collins, Colin Provencher, Mark Schroeter, Eric Dickson, Marry Ruffing, Linda Belval, Carl Comstock, Tracy Robar, Kim Earle, Jess Sanborn, Brittany McAdams, Melanie Bangora.

**GMSA Staff (4):** Karen Topper, Nicole Leblanc, Max Barrows, Skye Peebles.

### Local Group Updates:

#### **Next Step**



- Most of our group couldn't be here unfortunately.
- I was part of a training last week. We are improving it because we haven't

done it in awhile. It is called Look Through Our Eyes. We added some new parts. The audience when we do the training is for new staff member of the agency. Self-advocates do the training and they are helped by staff.

- Next Step self-advocates has been part of the special core transitions team in the county. Sometimes the high school students end up coming to the local group.
- Working on a webinar they are doing for the VT Family Network



### **Windsor Self-Advocates**

- We are in the process of planning a St. Patrick's dance in Windsor on March 16<sup>th</sup> from 1-3pm. \$3 per person and is a fundraiser for our group. Anyone can come.

### **COPS**

- Topper came down and did a training called more than just friends.
- I would like to share that I got a job this month at the Hartland House and at a law office. I also volunteer at the hospital. The one thing I am really proud of is of the new home that I have. I'm really proud of that.



### **Speak Up, Addison County**

- Working on a new t-shirt design and they might be for sale at some point. We are using a new company from Pittsburgh.
- I have been volunteering at the public library for many years now. (From Craig Davis).



## CAT

- Currently working on a sock fundraiser. They start it next month.
- They are going to have a small party for Valentine's Day.
- For me, I have been working at this volunteer job for the VT Mountaineers since 2011. We have fun doing this. (From Hillary).



## GATSA

- Will be meeting with max to talk about bullying and respectful language training for high schools.
- Our local group will be coming up with a training for oncoming staff at LCMHS.
- They donated 4 thanksgiving baskets to local community businesses.
- I have been the GATSA secretary forever and also I am the secretary of GMSA. (From Lori)
- I volunteer at a care home in Morrisville and I like to see the different people up there. (From Debbie)
- I have sold about 9 bags of lollipops so far.
- I am very proud that in May I will be graduating from College Steps program. (From Raymond)



## Communication Alliance

- They are currently trying to get into Peoples Academy to talk about supported typing.
- They recently went to Montpelier high school.
- They are building a website to better explain the activities of the learning collaborative.

## SAVY

- Working on making valentine's cards as a fundraiser for our group



## **BSAC**

- Right now we are planning a Valentine's Day dance. It's a Hollywood Prom theme.
- I am proud that yesterday I spoke up in front of my church.
- 3 of our stories are in GMSA newsletter. We are proud of this.
- We hosted an event called "Ask Us Anything" and lots of legislators and board of SSDA, chief of police, someone from Bernie Sanders office came. The conversations we had started lots of things to follow up on. We want to teach a workshop on this at this year's conference.
- We participated in GMSA elections.



## **VT Choices**

- I am working Tuesdays at Salvation Army for the last couple of months in St. J.  
(From Erik)
- We are planning a Valentine's Day dance.



## **Hot Seat with Roy G: Director of Developmental Disability Services**

- I am the new director of DS at DAIL. Everyone has been really nice at DAIL and cares a lot about what happens for people with disabilities. The division is supposed

to make sure the system works well for you. We help the local agencies be as effective as possible. I have been asking the agencies what we can do to help do their jobs better and with few complications.

- One of the most important things I have done since starting in October is listening and asking questions.
- I am happy to be in VT. I used to live in VT but for the past 2 years I have been living in NH.
- I went to Johnson State College too. Go Badgers!
- How many years have you been working for different agencies? I started working for agencies in 1979 after graduating from college.
- What is your biggest personal challenge with the growth and improving the quality of DS in VT? One is what we can do today to make sure the future is better. What are the things we need to be careful about for the future, to prepare for? It is most critical that the agencies get all the help they need to make sure the services are personalized and individualized. Quality of services are specific to people and communities and do not become “the same ice cream flavor for everybody.” It is very important that agencies become more skilled in listening to your (self-advocate) voice and respect your ability to make decisions in your life. This is a human right to be respected for the decisions we make.
- What direction do you see DS services going in the next few years? The nice thing is that the direction will be similar to the past; the VT system is powerful and good. It has lots of strengths that other states don't have. We need to take advantage of the strengths.
- Are there new technologies to help us save money so we don't affect services. We need to be careful that money saved goes into making services stronger.
- One of my best friends is a dog named Nora. I love taking her for hikes. I like music and just went to a concert at the Flynn Theater.

- Why did you get into DS services? The high school I went to was segregated. The students with disabilities lived at Laconia State School. I thought it was wrong and wanted to learn more about people with disabilities. When I was in college, I asked where the people with disabilities were and they pointed down the road to Brandon Training School. So I worked at Brandon TS for a time period and it convinced me that things needed to change.
- Who do you answer to? My boss is Commissioner Monica Hutt and we meet every couple of weeks for a supervision meeting. The people who report to me include people who work for quality assurance, I supervise the person who runs Office of Public Guardian, and other staff who work with the agencies. Before this, I was in NH. NH also has designated agencies. I was the Exec Director of an agency in Concord, NH for more than 20 years and decided when this job opened up it would be a great way to learn something new and make a difference.
- One of my hobbies is playing drums. Bongo drums and Congos. At Xmas, I got a drone and have been playing with that outside. I like to read and watch action movies. I live being outside.
- I have 2 sons and a daughter. I used to coach my sons soccer team.



### **How can DAIL help self-advocacy get stronger?**

The group broke into small groups for 10 minutes to discuss the question from Roy.

- help people have stronger local groups
- starting in the school system so other people know about GMSA
- be more involved in the community doing activities
- think about making a commercial about Self-Advocacy groups

- word of mouth and trainings
- need money to get young self-advocates involved in Self-Advocacy
- travel to schools to educate special educators about importance of teaching Self-Advocacy
- self-advocacy should be part of special education plans
- invite students to some advocacy meetings – both local and state
- start self-advocacy groups in schools
- Invite special educators to come to voices and choices and bring students. Have workshops at conference to train special educators.
- Keep an eye on bills on laws that are being passed
- More groups getting firsthand experience at the state house
- Get lawyers to come in and talk about all of our rights.
- We bake sale too much; we must use public outreach to create awareness and making better opportunities for self-advocacy skills.

### Elections



Talked about delaying the election winners until next meeting, due to the fact that there are groups that haven't voted yet. The motion was passed, they will wait until the next meeting to announce the winners.

## Voices and Choices



Registration forms made available for people to get. They called attention to page 3, it is 125\$ if it is received before April 15<sup>th</sup>, if you send it after that it will be 150\$, needs to be in by April 25<sup>th</sup>. The theme this year is Think Work-Centered around employment.

The next form they called attention to was local group awards. This is when they pick a self advocate of the year. You also need to choose the Ally of the year. The deadline for these two things is April 15<sup>th</sup>.

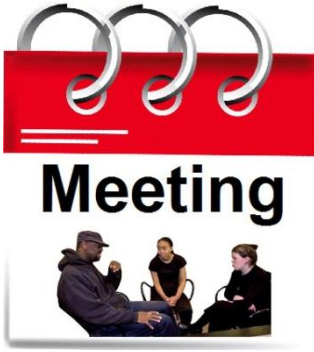
Next form is the scholarship form. One of our founding members of GMSA is Herman Goldberg. Herman is now 84 years old and he is starting to donate money to GMSA. He just gave \$1000. He is going to keep donating his extra money to GMSA month by month. He loved going to voices and choices, so we will be using this money to create scholarship funds for people. The deadline to apply is March 19<sup>th</sup>.

The talent show form was also brought to attention. Talent show will be on Monday May 9<sup>th</sup>. The deadline to apply for this is April 15<sup>th</sup>.

The Theresa A Wood citizenship award will also be given out. Anyone who is eligible for services can be nominated for this award. The deadline to get this form back is April 8<sup>th</sup>.

There is also a sponsorship form which is to help pay for the conference. These sponsors will get credit and their logo will be in multiple places. Plenty of recognition for these businesses. You can take these sponsorship forms and find a business near you and show them the form and see if they want to donate something to the conference.





## **2016 Meeting Schedule**

The price of renting VTC went up. It is too expensive for GMSA. All board meetings are going to be at Our Lady of Angels Church from now on. We heard there was some confusion about the information on the website. We will make sure that the website is updated.

### **Board Alternates**

Raymond asked if the groups have picked alternates. Groups shared who their alternate is.

CAT – Lehana

VT Choices – Mark

FHF – needs to do it in their group

BSAC – Marjorie

### **Applications for Allies on the Board**

Went over application.

Ally is someone who does not have a disability but supports self-advocates and the self-advocacy movement.

We are looking for 2 allies to join the board of GMSA as voting members.

They need to fill out the application and give it back to GMSA staff.



## Legislative Days & Feb 1<sup>st</sup> Training

Went over dates for this year legislative days.

- Feb 1 – Amy Shollengerber is doing a training
- 15 people coming from BSAC
- Need to tell Topper so we make sure there is enough food for everyone.

There are 3 legislative days this year.

- If you are coming with a large group, come on Disability Awareness Day.
- If you come with a carload of people, we can give you more individual attention on the other 2 dates.
- Still not sure how the budget looks for DS until DAIL testifies this coming week.