

## **GMSA Board Meeting June 27, 2016**

**Officers:** Randy Lizotte, Danielle Viau

**Board Members:** Antoine Polgar, Kayia Andrews, Tesha Thibodeau, Mike Tarr, Vicki Upham, Jennifer McMahon, Erik Johnson, Erica Bertleson

**Self-Advocates Present:** Nicole LeBlanc, April Hartley, Jeremy Chaim, Hillary Christian, Levi Gardner, Josh Dumais, Adam Mozdierz, Robert Martin, Mark Preman, Kris Midena

**Allies Present:** Karen Noone, Karen Topper, Anderson, Mary Ruffing, Joanne Cyr, Mark Schroder, Amethyst Crowe, Paul Tidyman, Shawn McCaffrey, Corl, Comstock, Britney McAdams, Sid, Melony Bangoura, Pat Warner, Lisa Spates

### **1. Introductions and Group Updates**

**Newport Self-Advocates** Mike Tarr reported that the group is growing herbs – sell them at a bake sale. Erica is here. Maybe we could figure – most important goals at the top – come up with one or two major goals – then come up with next important. Make sure the goals are made by the person – get the people

**Capitol Advocates Together** We are doing 50/50 raffle at Mountaineers game today, walking in the July 3 parade, August we will have a picnic, Stirling Peebles is our new president and Jeff Gove is Treasurer.

**St. Albans Next Step-** Killington Training on Supported Decision Making, Max visited and went over ISA goals. Sid- Agencies are being pushed to be accountable for the ISA goals being met. How can we explore training service coordinators and Allies about ISA goals? GMSA is trying to help SA's focus on a few goals that are really meaningful to them. Perhaps we should prioritize goals and put the most important ones first. Make sure the person's support group is on board with it. August and September we are doing voter registration and open house. The group went to the agency picnic for the last meeting. For the last meeting of the month, they will meet at the park by the bay.

**Communication Alliance**- working on ideas for fundraising. Max came to our meeting to do a fundraising training. They are doing a training on fading support to Washington County Mental Health staff who are interested in using Facilitated Communication.

**Windsor County Self-Advocates** - working on a fall fundraiser dance

**Speak Up Addison County** – is on vacation for now.

**BSAC** - April is now president. They are finding Board Members for BSAC 2. Fundraising is a topic they are working on.

**Randolph Area Peer Support**- went to Hopkins Center. The group is going to teach a class in self-advocacy.

**VT Choices** some of the group went to Killington for Supported Decision Making training. Josh did an inspirational slide show on how he lost 135 pounds. They planted potatoes in the community garden. Levi is the President of the group.

Adam -Max is coming to the group next month. Going to walk in the parade.

## **2. The Disability Rights Law Project: Nancy Breiden**

They are based in offices around the State. They help people with legal issues based on their disability. They are reaching out to ask us what they should be spending their time doing?

1. Guardianship is an issue they have identified as a place they would focus on. They are looking at working with the schools in one county in the state to look at all the people that are applying for guardianship and hope they can support alternatives to guardianship.
2. Employment was prioritized last year but no one brought a case. They cannot create jobs. They help with discrimination issues.
3. Transportation – work on discrimination issues. They cannot create transportation.
4. The parks are not accessible and they could install adult swings.

5. Some self-advocates are interested in mentoring people with guardianship issues. They need information.
6. Guardianship- some people have a State Guardian and some people have a private guardian. If you want to become your own guardian you need to call the DD Law project. They will help you come up with an argument for the judge. How does your guardian feel about this? Many people are frightened to talk to their guardian about this. Sometimes the project will help come up with a plan to work on skills that will help convince the judge. They are looking closely at private guardians.
7. Some parents need information about guardianship and how to let their son or daughter grow up treat them like an adult.
8. Conflict of interest- home provider/guardian conflict.  
The public guardians are government employees and this could be seen as a conflict.
9. The lawyers can talk to the guardians or have them talk to public guardians about letting people grow up. They try to find out what the guardians are worried about? Sometimes they go to court to contest guardianship.
10. More likely to get a fair decision family court. The court appoints a lawyer and sometimes will not appoint the DD Law project. Probate judges are elected.
11. DD Law project is putting together trainings for judges about supported decision making. They are trying to get on the probate judges' agenda for trainings.
12. Guardianship orders are individualized and specific.
13. Would like to focus on the transitioning youth.
14. GMSA can revisit employment discrimination training.
15. Housing there is not enough accessible physically and financially. This is a VT Legal Aid project.
16. Discrimination in getting a credit score because people don't have a credit card even though they have paid their rent/bills regularly on time.
17. Training employers about having people with disabilities working for them.  
(Confidentiality)

BREAK till 11:10

## Discussion about Guardianship

1. What do you think are the problems with guardianship?
  - Not everyone needs a full guardian
  - People don't have the information
  - VR is not helping people with this-GMSA spoke to the advisory committee supervising VR about what they are really responsible for. VR will have more responsibility in folks' transition.
  - People with disabilities think if they need help with something they need a guardian. That is incorrect. There are other ways to help without having a guardian.
  - Guardian shelters me. Driver's permit, increasing my work hours, getting my birth certificate (can't vote, can't get a passport, can't get an ID to get a bank account,) Guardian won't give me my SS# so I can get another birth certificate. Can find the SS# from agency.
  - Guardians need to send a report on guardianship every year to keep guardianship. Probate court can tell the status of your guardianship.

What do you find helpful about guardianship?

- There's a lot less to worry about. Like paying bills.
- My guardian helped me with my special diet. She helps me with money. Helped me move. Now I am my own guardian and I still get the help I need.
- I became my own guardian by writing letters and going to court. Took about a year and I did it myself.

What would be most helpful to you in making decisions in your own life?

- Help managing my money

- Getting a ride to medical appointments
- Paying my bills
- Knowing what's out there and how to access the help
- Having the information we need to make the decision in the first place about guardianship.

What decisions did you make today?

- I made the decision to come here this morning

### **Hot Seat- April Hartley**

- Movie- comedy, drama, action, dramatic scenes, romance
- Where are you from- born in ND and my dad traveled a lot. Now I live in VT in Richmond.
- Spare time? Bowling, dancing, BSAC, hanging out with friends, overnights, I like shrimp and ice cream and candy.
- Camp? Camp Thorpe
- Favorite season- Spring because my birthday and baby animals
- Summer because I go to my neighbor's pool. I play soccer.
- College- graduated from Think College at UVM I studied music.
- I work at Goodwill- I have 4 bosses
- Trip? - Canada to go to a concert
- What do you like best about your job- Clothing because I like fashion
- Live? Spain I love to travel
- Has a boyfriend who lives in Burlington
- Blake Shelton I am obsessed with him.
- Favorite show – the Voice
- Humane Society- Cats

**What kinds of tools or booklets or activities that would be helpful in your local groups?**

- Self-advocates should be on the ethics committee at each hospital around the state when decisions about self-advocates
- Continuing education opportunities
- How to recruit new allies
- Drop in site
- Booklet with ice breakers
- Recruitment for self-advocates
- More groups in High Schools