



He's Twice an Advocate!

Riot Blog - November 2014

Interview with David Frye

David lives in Vermont and is a member of Green Mountain Self-Advocates. David is gay. He leads support groups for people with disabilities who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or queer/questioning (also known as GLBTQ) statewide. He works a full-time job and volunteers his time to run these support groups. He has several awards for his advocacy work!

Riot: How did you get involved in this work?

David: A few years ago, I went to a Self-Advocates Becoming Empowered (SABE) conference and went to a workshop on relationships. There was a little bit about gay and lesbian relationships, but not much. I thought there needed to be more out there for people who have a disability and are also GLBTQ. I connected with the Pride Center of Vermont. Its mission is to: "Celebrate and support Vermont's lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer community of all ages, to educate and to act as a bridge to create alliances with each other and the greater community as a whole." I asked if they had groups for people with disabilities. They said, "No, but you could get something started."

Riot: Who has supported you in this work?

David: The Center has really helped me get the support groups up and running. They helped me plan for the groups, think of educational topics – like teaching people with disabilities about safe sex, and get guest speakers. Green Mountain Self-Advocates has helped me, too. My family supports me and knows how important this work is to me. My roommates have also been really supportive.

Riot: What are the support groups like?

David: We go around the room and introduce ourselves and check-in on what's been going on that week. People are free to say what they want to say. We don't say anything outside the group. It's very confidential.



Riot: Do you also help to train others about this topic?

David: Yes, I teach self-advocates how to run meetings and support groups. I also work to educate health care providers, social workers, and others about people with disabilities who are GLBTQ, because they need this information, too.

Both worlds need to be educated – The GLBTQ community needs to be accepting of people with disabilities, and people with disabilities need to be accepting of people who are GLBTQ. If you need support from the GLBTQ community, get in touch with your local Pride Center.

Riot: What is beautiful about the work you do with people with disabilities who are GLBTQ?

David: I think it is beautiful to see somebody who has been so sheltered, or is in a wheelchair, or can't talk and uses a communication device – when you show them that they are not alone. When I bring them to their first Gay Pride event, it makes me so proud to see their smiling face. This is why I do what I do!

For more information about Pride Center of Vermont, go to:

<http://pridecentervt.org/pride-home>

For more information about Green Mountain Self-Advocates, go to:

<http://www.gmsavt.org/>