

**GMSA Board Meeting**  
**8/25/2014 ~ 9:30 to 12:30**  
**Our Lady of Angels Parish Hall, Randolph, VT**



**38 Self-Advocates**

**Officers:** Randy Lizotte, Nicole Villemare, David Frye, Lori Jones

**Board Members:** Craig Davis, Patty Grassette, Rachel Colby, Erik Johnson, James Paradis, Linda Monette, Heather Raymond

**Members:** Adam Moztzierz, Amy Guinard, Kyle Riopel, Adam Crocker, Rachel MacMartin, Bethany Drum, Dan Dunn, Tracy Thresher, Antoine Polar, Lorna Merrill, Jeremy Chaim, Debbie Demars, Marilyn Shank, Amanda Bianchi, Marjorie Burns, Patti Gibbins, Mary LaFountain, Robert Martin II, Josh Dumais, Levi Gardner, Lisa Rudiakov, Connor Cleveland.

**GMSA Staff:** Kris Medina, Max Barrows, Hillary Clark, Nicole LeBlanc, Kyle Moriarty, Skye Peebles and Karen Topper

**22 Allies:** Edward Thorndike, Greg Masterson, Mattie Delany, Emily Chaud, Leigh Descoteaux, Susan Holly, Paula Collins, Tammy Maberry, Lisa Quinn, Amy Anderson, Jenn Carr, Paul Appleby, Danielle Cote, Rich Atkinson, Wendy Capobianco, Erin Rose, April McCandless, Jeannette Hurdle, Jayne Weber, Richard Young.

**Guest Presenter:** Senator Anthony Pollina



**GROUP UPDATES**

**FRIENDS HELP FRIENDS ~ Barre**



- Rachel Colby is new GMSA board member representing group.
- Had carwash fundraiser for national conference and made \$116.00.
- Planning public speaking workshop for group before legislative session.
- Co-teaching 2 workshops at national conference in Oklahoma
- Having a dinner dance on September 7th supported by donations from area businesses.

**Communication Alliance**

- Tracy and Kyle testified at state house on budget cuts in August.
- Members are preparing a training for support staff at WCMH



## Speak Up Addison County



- On August 28 having a BBQ in Middlebury and the St. Albans group is coming too.
- Craig Davis is the board representative
- Did a nutrition workshop. Planning a cooking class.

**Randolph Area Peer Support ~ RAPS** is hosting series of self-advocacy workshops taught by GMSA.



## Windsor County Self-Advocacy Group

- Next month we are working on making a chapter flier
- We have a secretary and treasurer but waiting to elect a Vice-President and President.

**Advocates for Action** We are going to have a dance meeting. Members & allies going to SABE

## GATSA ~ Getting Acquainted Through Self-Advocacy



- Had 2 firefighters from Morrisville come and talk about internet safety and public safety
- 3 of us testified at the state house about budget cuts and we were in the news (WCAX evening coverage; VT Digger and Burlington Free Press)

## Next Step Self-Advocates



- Heather Raymond chosen by Next Step to be their representative on the GMSA board.
- Our group went to the ECHO learning center – it was a big educational field trip
- Had BBQ potluck and kickball game
- Ryan Savage, legislator, came in and helped people in our group learn how to vote

and get registered to vote

- Several members are planning to teach workshops at the National self-advocacy conference in Oklahoma.



## BSAC ~ Burlington Self-Advocacy Club

- Doing a fundraiser for the food shelf
- Hosting a Halloween dance and chose Luau theme for the Valentine's dance on Feb 6th!
- Scheduling with GMSA to teach basic self-advocacy workshops

## Vermont Choices

- Several members are planning to teach workshops at the National self-advocacy conference in Oklahoma. Group is also going to fall carnival



## CAT ~ Capitol Advocates Together

- On 9/11 we are having a dinner to invite family members, friends and allies together.
- Several members are planning to teach workshops at the National self-advocacy conference in Oklahoma.

## Families First Peer Group

- Attended their first GMSA board meeting



## Bennington Peer Support

- Members have been at camps this summer.
- Did a Boche tournament and Fundraisers and dances hopefully
- There is a change in our groups advisors for this year
- Planning to do a workshop taught by GMSA

## UPDATE ON BUDGET CUTS



Nicole gave an update on the budget cuts from August. Nicole said our pro-activeness definitely helped. The Governor proposed cutting all one-time money. 1 time funding is vital for things like buying communication tools and eyeglasses. After the testimony legislators decided to only cut 50% of one-time money from the DS Budget. We made a difference but our work is not done. Thanks to everyone who went and spoke up. Lots more work to do in the coming session

## BOARD MEMBERS

Randy went around and asked everyone to update on the GMSA board member nominations. Here are the updates:

- GATSA – Raymond Gordon
- SAAVY – Patty Grassette
- GLBTQ – David Frye
- Next Step – Heather Raymond
- Speak up – Craig Davis
- Friends Helping Friends – Rachel Colby
- Windsor County – James Paradis
- Advocates For Action – Linda Monette
- CAT – *not yet*
- Families First – *not yet*
- VT Choices – *not yet*
- BSAC – *not yet*
- RAPS – *not yet*
- Communication Alliance – *not yet*



- There are 3 qualifications to be a board member;
- ⇒ Elected by your group and a member of your local group
  - ⇒ Have to be able to make 4 meetings a year
  - ⇒ Have to be a person with a developmental disability



**Why are we forming an official board?** This is a 501 C (3) requirement. 4 of our general membership board meetings will be designated as official board meetings each year. From now on, only board members vote (but everyone else can give input). Board meetings will be held at the same time and places as usual.



**DIRECT SUPPORT PROFESSIONALS RECOGNITION DAY  
9/12/14**

Broke up into small groups and wrote stories about how your support workers help you out. People decorated flags and drafted up ideas. People read their stories out loud.



**PRESENTATION OF ALLY OF THE YEAR AWARD  
TO ANTHONY POLLINA**

Nicole, Kyle and Kris gave thanks to Anthony for being such a great ally. Randy and Nicole gave the plaque to Anthony. We posted all the photos on our Facebook page.

**ANTHONY FACILITATED A DISCUSSION ABOUT GMSA'S CONCERNS**

**What Are Biggest Obstacles/ Barriers To Making Change Or Getting Involved In Making Change?**

- Fear of speaking up – people are afraid to speak up
- I think we should all be treated equal
- Transportation – it is not easy to find a ride
- I am stuck with different staff every day – there is inconsistency
- Political and economic environment – we all want a people’s budget that is based on need not on how much is available
- People have trouble building their own life – we want to be treated like people but we get shut down sometimes – self-advocacy is the way to build that up



- Communication
- I took a leadership training that taught me how to speak from the heart about what I want for people with disabilities
- Not enough notice to speak up – 24 hour notice for the budget cut hearings
- Attitudes, what people think about what we say
- Important to be “grilled” when testifying at the state house and have people ask you questions – makes you stronger and look more informed
- Many policy makers don’t have a clue about what people are going through these days
- Need better training and support for people who use supported typing.

## How do you know if you have been successful? How do you measure success?



- It doesn't always happen quickly. We see it over time.
- We haven't seen enough change to stop doing this fight.
- Need to have achievable goals – steps along the way – set decent goals that you can reach
- You can use the steps as a benchmark to see if things are being successful
- Our testimony made a big difference because people learned a lot – made an impact on what happened.

## Other Thoughts:



- I have a big concern about people who only need a little bit of support (2-3 hours per week) and want to find funding for that.
- Legislators work for us! We are the voters who put people in office!
- System Of Care Plan is under legislative review now so legislators will have to answer questions before they make cuts.

## UPDATES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS



### Gala



November 15th is first annual GMSA Gala to celebrate GMSA 20 year anniversary! We need volunteers to help organize the event: Rachel MacMartin, Hilary Clark, David Frye, Greg Masterson, Nicole Villemaire, Craig Davis and Amy Guinard. We will have ticket information up in late September sometime. David told us about the RU12 gala to explain what a gala party is. The gala is like a fundraiser to make money for the organization. Food stations, silent auctions, awards, music, educate about the organization.



### Job Opportunity at GMSA

Randy read the job description. People need to apply (send a letter) by September 5, 2014.

### Newsletter Articles

Fall newsletter is coming up in September. Please let Skye or Nicole know if you want to send one in 500 words or less. Deadline is late September





## LGBTQ Update



9/14 is Pride in Burlington. You can be an ally of LGBTQ people to join the groups. You can come to the groups if you are interested in learning more. David is getting an award in September from United Way for his work in the groups. GLBTQ people with disabilities can bring in their artwork to RU12 to be displayed at the gala. Meetings every month in Burlington, St. Albans and St. Johnsbury. There may be a group in Brattleboro starting soon.

## PEER MENTORING

This is a project GMSA is working on with DS Directors. We are trying to figure out how to get peer mentors more formalized in the VT. We worked in small groups to discuss what does peer mentoring mean to you?

GATSA (Debby, Marilyn and Lori)

- Similar disabilities – more relate-able
- Positive role model
- Helping out
- Flexible and understanding
- Giving advice but don't control the situation
- Education, teaching

Small Group A

- People with disabilities helping others with same disabilities. They understand your challenges. Empathy.
- Reduces isolation
- The advice you get is different
- A peer would have similar viewpoint, would understand both what you need done and how you need it done.
- A peer is not always overprotective
- We would rather learn about ISAs from a peer.

Families First Peer Group

- Peer mentoring is a great idea; having a safe person to talk to; increases sense of community and provide an ally for helping to get things done

- People would have more peer support which is sometimes more valuable than support from family or staff.
- Peers would have greater understanding than family or staff
- Peer mentors encourage people to speak up

Small Group B

- Helping people to advocate, how to speak up
- Someone you can talk to confidentially to ask advice
- Help you understand paperwork like from: medical doctors, your boss at work, lawyers, landlords, utility, paying bills, banking, how to budget your money, health insurance
- Help with grocery shopping, healthy eating and exercise, cooking, can help with getting to and from work

RAPS and Friends Helping Friends

- There needs to more of it
- Helping out little kids with DD because they do not know who to turn to
- Give others pointers and suggestions

- Peer support creates or strengthens your ability to relate to others
- Peer support means unified effort
- To have people to talk to and get support from
- Having a situation where 2 people have DD gives the experience more credibility

#### Small Group C

- A person or group of people to further the group's cause; Often members are paid

### **What should peer mentoring look like in Vermont?**

GATSA (Debby, Marilyn and Lori)

- Be on the same page where mentors meet regularly and have the same training
- Communication
- Listening skills
- Not being bossy
- Peer mentor support group
- Board or one person overseeing the mentors

#### Small Group A

- Have mentoring/teaching groups off "agency" property
- Different mentors have different strengths – optimize these strengths
- Trainings on: Public speaking, Lesson planning; planning training and Advocacy speaking

#### Communication Alliance

- Okay this is my dream to have peer mentoring recognized by our agencies. I have been peer mentoring as a volunteer for many moons. To me peer mentoring is about giving hope to other who have challenges similar to my own. (The support person added that many feel that it is unfair that Self-Advocates have been for years mentoring

#### Small Group D

- Help people to speak up for themselves
- Help them form relationships
- Someone like a big sister
- Someone who has same problems and needs and understands your problems
- Having someone who is patient and understanding

and have never been paid for it.

The agency staff are paid to support the mentor but the real important work is being done by the mentor and they are not paid.)

#### Families First Peer Group

- Peer mentors should be available at most times
- Lead person with multiple mentors
- TRAININGS – consistent across the state
- Mentors should get paid
- Group and single availability

#### Small Group B

- Informational website or pamphlet that details: who does what, when they are available and where they live
- Have ongoing workshops that travel around the state that teach: healthy lifestyles, how to use the gym, how to use public transportation, how to do banking and pay bills
- Mentors need training in public speaking, HIPAA, First Aid and CPR

### **RAPS and Friends Helping Friends**

- We want it to look like GMSA meaning that there are peer mentoring groups in separate towns but there's a main jumping off point
- Form a committee to help make good peer matches

### **Small Group C**

- We should use born leaders to do the mentoring based on particular strengths and abilities
- Utilize as many strengths as possible in various ways

### **Small Group D**

- Instead of staff doing home support, have a peer who is skilled in daily living (cooking, cleaning, laundry). Need to be trained in this area.
- Make and attend medical appointments and assist if necessary in using public transportation
- Recreation: monies, dinner especially peers who drive
- Someone who has computer skills
- Basic safety and first aid skills
- Helping someone to read and to talk too.