



Green Mountain Self-Advocates Board Meeting
2/23/2015 - 9:30 am to 12:30 pm
Vermont Technical College, Randolph, VT



Officers (3): Lori Jones (Secretary), Nicole Villemaire (Treasurer), Levi Gardner (Vice-President) Randy Lizotte was absent.

Board Members (14): Raymond Gordon, Kaiya Andrews, Joel Marshall, Donna Corkins, Patty Grassette, Jeremiah Gerbasi, Erik Johnson, James Paradis, Heather Raymond, Danielle Viau, Rachel Colby, Taylor Terry, Conor Cleveland and Linda Monette.

Self-Advocates (20): Hilary Christen, Jenny Rainville, Marjory Burns, Amy Guinard, Hilary Clark, Adam Moztaierz, Robert Martin, Lorna Merrill, Josh Dumais, Erica Darcelsen, Jeremy Chain, Tracy Thresher, Dan Dunn, Kris Medina, Cy Trombley, Carol Cole, Debbie Demars, Tiffany Martinez, Lauren Tewhill and Michaelle Greenberg.

Groups Represented (13): Next Step Self-Advocacy, BSAC – Burlington Self-Advocacy Club, Newport Drop-In Center, SAVY – Strong Advocacy Voices and You, CAT- Capitol Advocates Together, Friends Helping Friends, GATSA- Getting Acquainted Through Self-Advocacy, Advocates For Action, Windsor County Self-Advocates, VT Choices, Champlain Voices, Families First Peer Group, RAPS- Randolph Areas Peer Support

GMSA Staff (2): Karen Topper (Administrative Director), Skye Peebles (Program & Development Director).

Allies: not recorded.



AGENDA #1: Randy explained the new table set up we are using. There is an inner table that just board members and officers sit at. Then an outer circle of tables and chairs for other members and allies.



Discussion:

- People said they think it is a good idea

- I like it set up like this because it helps representatives have control. I think it should be set up like this for all the next meetings.
- I think it is a good idea.



AGENDA #2: Introductions and local group updates:



Lori Jones from GATSA: Getting Acquainted Through Self-Advocacy:

- Didn't meet in February because of weather.
- We are selling pizzas for a fundraiser.
- We are doing training for local police officers about interacting with people with disabilities.
- We are also doing trainings on these topics: self-esteem, stress management, making friends, and how to budget. We are having elections at next meeting.

Raymond Gordon from GATSA: Getting Acquainted Through Self-Advocacy:

- Raymond will be attending the Leadership Series.
- 4 of our members went to the State House on Feb 4th. We had appointments and met with our legislators. Several of our members also testified at the public hearing on the budget that was held on interactive television on February 9th.
- At our January meeting we talked about goals and trainings from last year. We want to go to schools to talk about the R word.

James Paradis from Windsor Self-Advocates:



- Most of our members went to the State House on Feb 4th. We met with our legislators to talk about budget cuts and participated in a legislative advocacy training presented by GMSA.
- Our February meeting was canceled due to weather.

Linda Monette from **Advocates in Action**:



- Most of our members went to the State House on Feb 4th. We met with our legislators and participated in a legislative advocacy training presented by GMSA.
- We had a successful Valentine's Day dance.

Conor Cleveland from **Communication Alliance**:



- Working on fundraising activities.
- Continued work preparing to do disability awareness presentations in schools.

Kaiya Andrews from **Capitol Advocates Together**:



- Some of our members met with their legislators on February 4th. We also attended the public hearing held on Interactive Television on February 9th and testified about the budget for Developmental Services
- Our meeting was cancelled due to bad weather.

Nicole Villemaire from **Next Step Self-Advocacy**:



- Members advocated at the state house on February 4th. One of our peer leaders testified in Senate Health and Welfare Committee.
- Max Barrows visited our group and is planning to work with us on a training about ISAs.
- One of our local leaders, Cory Savage, will be attending the Leadership Training Series.

Rachel Colby from **Friends Helping Friends**:



- We met with Max and Topper from GMSA to work with our group to get more members involved in running our meetings.

- Two members are working on teaching a workshop for Voices and Choices about dating.

Danielle Viau from **Burlington Self-Advocacy Club:**



- They had a Luau theme for their Valentine's Day Dance on 2/13 from 7-10pm. It was a fundraiser to benefit the Humane Society.
- Planning to teach 2 workshops at the Voices and Choices Conference: healthy eating and relationships/communication.

Joel Marshall and Molly White from **RAMB: Rockin' Advocates of Central Vermont.**



- Molly White was accepted and is planning to attend the 3 session of the Leadership Training Series.
- We are a large group with student members from the following high schools: U-32, Spaulding, Harwood Union and Williamstown.



Vermont Choices: Josh Dumais and Levi Gardner

- Organized a Valentine's Day dance as a fundraiser.

Our Drop-In Center of Newport



- Elected new officers. We are going to have a new location for our Drop-In center. We are all happy to have a new one.
- Max Barrows visited our group and he's going to help us with fundraising ideas when he comes again; we were glad to have him.



SAVY – Strong Advocacy Voices and You

- Did a great job making appointments with their legislators and advocating at the state house on February 4th.



Champlain Voices

- Planning to advocate at the state house on March 18th.
- Just elected new officers and are busy selecting goals for 2015.



Families First Peer Group

- Elected a new representative to be on the GMSA board. It is Jeremiah Gerbasi.
- On February 12th they held a SnowBall. This was a formal event at the River Garden in downtown Brattleboro. Many members went to a place called Jessica's closet in Wilmington to rent their formal dresses.

RAPS- Randolph Areas Peer Support – February meeting was canceled due to bad weather.

AGENDA #3: Group Agreements

Nicole Villemare was presiding over the meeting. She read the group agreements out loud.



James Paradis made a motion that we should pass around the group agreements and if people agree, they should sign it.



The motion was seconded by Jeremiah Gerbasi from Families First. The group had a discussion. Three more actions were added to the motion.

1. Type up group agreements and put in the board member book.
2. Add “people need to come to the meeting” to the agreements
3. Add Step Up and Step Back to the agreements

The board members voted and the motion passed.

Here are the group agreements:

- Confidentiality - personal stories stay in the room
- Raise your hand if you want to speak

- Encourage others to speak and give their answers. Be open to everybody.
- Only one person speaks at a time.
- No question is silly
- No texting or calling during a meeting.
- During conflict, consider different ideas. No judging.
- Ask before taking pictures.
- Board members need to come to the board meetings
- People who are shy need to try to Step Up and people who speak a lot need to try to Step Back.



AGENDA #4: Voices and Choices

FORMS: All the Conference Forms were handed out. All forms can also be found on the GMSA website. Please get them out far and wide.

AWARDS: Everyone talked about all the different kinds of awards for the conference:



- Theresa Wood award: is for a person with a disability, Theresa Wood and board officers and previous winners get to decide.
- Ally of the Year Award: the board gets to vote on this
- Local Group Self-Advocate of the Year and Ally awards: local groups vote on this

WORKSHOPS: who has taught a workshop before?

- Eric Johnson – taught one about personal exercise routine
- Hilary Clark – dress to impress
- Tracy – taught about the right to communicate
- Levi – dating game
- Lori – Sweet Sugar Beverage, rock exercise, how to talk to your legislators
- ★ Donna read the list of workshop rules – need to have a self-advocate to lead, should be interactive (games, ask questions, work in small groups, should be fun, music, role plays), move at a good pace/ not too fast, best to have gang of people to teach
- ★ If you teach a workshop, you can get \$65 off your registration cost





STORE. Skye went over ballot of ideas for things to sell at the conference. Everyone took 10 minutes to fill out the ballot. The Conference Planning Committee will review this and talk about the votes at the next meeting.

LOGO CONTEST: GMSA is having a contest to pick the logo for the conference. We will put info up on the website.



TALENT SHOW: Families First Peer Group is hosting the Talent Show at the conference again this year. You are allowed to do one song by yourself or with someone else. We had a great talent show last year! This is for anyone and any talent – you can sing, dance, and tell jokes, anything. You need to sign up ahead of time.



AGENDA #5: Board Book



We reviewed all the pages in the Board Book. We are going to put it all together on the website in the Board Book. We are glad to put together binders for all the local groups.

AGENDA #6: Elect Vice President of Board

**VOTE
FOR
ME**

Lori read about what the Vice President does. This includes having a monthly conference call for 1-2 hours. There are sometimes other things that come up that we ask the officers to do.

Nominations:

- ★ Jeremiah Gerbasi– accepted the nomination
- ★ Levi Gardner– accepted the nomination
- ★ Robert Martin– accepted the nomination
- ★ Tracy Thresher– did not accept the nomination
- ★ Amy Guinard– accepted the nomination

All the board members met with their groups and then voted. The winner was Levi Gardner from VT Choices.

Legislative Events and Other Events



- Legislative Days are coming up in March 12th and 18th. Send your legislator a note to let them know you are coming. Please don't just show up.

- Tonight there is a community discussion about students with disabilities and black students being kicked out of school more often than other kids. It is at Plainfield Town Hall.



Budget Updates: There are handouts on the website that explain all of this information. The Governor's budget includes:

- A 2.5% increase in the Medicaid rate for a Cost of Living Increase. There hasn't been a COLA increase for the workers in a long time. Basically there are 2 pots of money.
- \$7 million of new money is being added for new people coming into services or existing people who need new services
- There is a cut of 1.9 million for people who are already getting services. There has already been 6 cuts in the last 6 years.

3 big point to educate your legislators about:

- We need the 7 million in new money for the new people.
- It is a good idea to give an increase to the workers so they don't leave. They haven't had a raise in a long time and they deserve it.
- We have had 6 cuts in 6 years and we don't want to have any more cuts. The 1.9 million dollar cut for Developmental Services will be a hardship for people.