



Grandparents Against Gun Violence Meeting Minutes January 27, 2020

Our Mission:

We work to reduce gun violence to keep all children safe at home, at school and in our community.

President Judy Sherry convened the meeting at 4:05 pm at Colonial Church in Prairie Village. 81 people were in attendance.

Judy welcomed all to this first meeting of 2020. She pointed out this is going to be a difficult year and collaboration with like-minded groups is vitally important. We need to use our collective voices to advocate for gun safety. She also mentioned two upcoming events: February 12 screening of *After Parkland*, a film featuring conversations with Parkland student survivors, teachers and families who loved ones. The screening is at 21c Hotel. GAGV is a co-host; tickets are FREE, and information is on GAGV Facebook page. She also reminded us of the **February 24** monthly meeting. We will focus on the importance of sharing facts with those who support us – and those who don't. The meeting will be interactive and include role-playing by two professionals to demonstrate how to have a meaningful and civil conversation.

Chris Glenski presented the Lock It For Love Report. 2,780 free gun locks have been given out to community members at 115 events involving 74 volunteers, 12 area metropolitan police departments, and 3 suicide prevention organizations. Chris asked those wanting to volunteer to sign-up after the meeting at the LIFL table.

As an introduction to *2020: The Year of Collaboration*, Judy introduced today's speakers, leaders representing organizations who have supported our annual Community Forum and are dynamic community partners in our work to address gun violence and its many ramifications. By understanding each group's goals and work, we can build a strong team of advocates and avoid duplication of efforts. Each representative shared the group's goals, current activities, and concrete ways we can work together.

Damon Daniels, President, Ad Hoc Group Against Crime – Damon explained Ad Hoc supports those who have been impacted by violence, helping them along their journey to seek healing and justice. They sit with victims and families in courtrooms during legal proceedings, offer trade school information, teach employment readiness, and restore homes and cars damaged during violence. They also provide trauma assessment and counseling, substance abuse treatment support, and relocation.

Damon observed that the criminal justice system doesn't work for poor people, it's not fair, and there is even disparity in how justice is carried out between counties. Ad Hoc tries to help people understand and walk through the criminal justice system. Ad Hoc partners with Connecting for Good with block watches and a camera network to help prevent crime, identify perpetrators and build a case for prosecution.

Needs include donations of products families in transition may need, i.e. diapers, feminine hygiene products, non-perishable food items, etc. <https://www.adhocgroupkc.com/>

Jill Buford, Mother's United For a Better Community – Mother's United was organized in 2006 to help families affected by homicide and violent crimes by being a servant and voice to stop the violence. They organize vigils to provide solace and to let families know their loved one is not forgotten. Mothers United volunteers are certified in what to say during difficult, tragic times. They provide missing person/runaway assistance. At Thanksgiving, they host a Homeless Community Dinner.

Leslie Mark represented Indivisible KC whose mission is to empower everyday people to actively engage in the voting process and with their elected representatives in order to build a more equal just future for all of us. Leslie challenged us, regardless of what we are doing, to do one more thing, add a friend, and go the next step – because the more effort you put into your activism, the greater impact it will have. Leslie gave links to register to vote: Kansas – www.ksvotes.org. Missouri – www.vote.org.

For more information about Indivisible KC and how you can become involved, visit their website at www.indivisiblekc.org which includes a list of events sponsored by their allies and progressive organizations.

Shannon Burgess, Johnson County Mental Health Center: When teen suicides in the county nearly doubled in the first six months of 2018, superintendents of six Johnson County school districts, Blue Valley, De Soto, Gardner/Edgerton, Olathe, Shawnee Mission and Spring Hill, began a collaboration for their districts to work with mental health providers, parents, religious leaders, and local businesses to develop mental health and suicide prevention programs. #zeroreasonswhy Teen Council came out of these discussions. <https://www.jocogov.org/dept/mental-health/home>

Hayley Moss, Senior at De Soto High School – #ZeroReasonsWhy is a community mobilization and story campaign to prevent teen suicide and drive productive conversations to affirm there are zero reasons why suicide is an option. They stress that mental health checks should be required just like physical health checks so children and teens know how to deal with emotions. She outlined their three strategic plans for 2020: Remove the Stigma, Build Community Support, Commit to Education.

Their powerful message is: Together, we will share the message that there are Zero Reasons Why suicide should be an option. There are Zero Reasons Why we can't turn to each other for help, Zero Reasons Why we shouldn't remind our friends we value them, Zero Reasons Why parents should be afraid to talk to their kids about complicated topics, and Zero Reasons Why we shouldn't know what resources are available.

GAGV members were asked to follow them on social media and participate in videos to share their own stories about mental health and suicide. There is a need for adults to role model being vulnerable and open. Hayley encouraged us to attend their next Community Convening Meeting on April 22 at the Plexpod in Lenexa. <https://www.zeroreasonswhy.org/new-page>

John Pauldine, Mainstream Coalition, introduced the Voter to Voter Project, a get-out-the-vote initiative. Because there is a 25% higher rate of voting due to relational organizing, Voter to Voter is an online tool that allows volunteer "ambassadors" to see the voting history of their friends, neighbors and coworkers, track the conversations they have with them about the election, and ultimately know if they were successful in persuading them to cast a ballot. This is a team based structure which even includes a Grandparents group. Webinar trainings on how to connect with friends and ask them to vote are Wednesdays at 9:30 am. **Follow this link and RSVP for a training session.** John asks you to follow on social media. <https://www.mainstreamcoalition.org/>

Kara Werner, Moms Demand Action KC – Moms Demand Action was founded in 2012 by Shannon Watts after Sandy Hook and now has 5 million supporters, more than the NRA, all volunteers, in every state, with several local chapters. "I pour every other second that I have into continuing to fight to end preventable gun violence," Kara said emphatically. "Gun violence is preventable." MDA pressures law makers to improve gun laws, educates the public about candidate distinctions, common-sense gun laws, responsible gun ownership, and voter registration. Kara asked us to check our voter registrations to make sure information is current. She encouraged us to attend Advocacy Days in Jefferson City (Feb. 18) and Topeka (Feb. 19). Carpools will be organized.

Loren Stanton, formerly with Brady Campaign NE Kansas, heads **The Gun Violence Prevention Project** which offers local businesses "No Guns Allowed" signs that prohibit anyone from bringing firearms, concealed or openly carried, onto their private property. Loren travels to Topeka once a week with GAGV member Carla Oppenheimer and invites GAGV members to accompany them.

The work of League of Women Voters was recognized several times. New to many is Souls to the Polls, a nonpartisan, grassroots initiative that is designed to ensure ALL voices are included at the "Tables of Power." Work with faith and other groups to turn out the vote. There is an organizing meeting Thursday, January 30, 6:30 pm at Oak Ridge Baptist Church, 9301 Parallel Pkwy., KCKS. Contact Ann Sanders for details. elizabethhansanders@yahoo.com

Judy adjourned the meeting at 5:40 pm reminding us that we do not have to reinvent the wheel as we can plug into these wonderful organizations and others that already have systems in place.

The next GAGV meeting is Monday, February 24 at Colonial Church.

Minutes submitted by
Charlotte Davison, Secretary