



Grandparents Against Gun Violence Meeting Minutes June 25, 2018

Judy Sherry convened the meeting at 4:10 pm at the Colonial Church in Prairie Village.

Charlotte Davison gave the membership report. GAGV has 1,467 subscribers to its newsletter and 263 paid members. There were 17 new attendees at today's meeting and the room was full of orange GAGV shirts.

Barb McNeile introduced Police Officer Bill Koehn of the Overland Park Police Department; he has demonstrated how to use gun locks at Lock It for Love events in OP. LIFL has had 40 events, given out 825 locks in 167 zip codes in the Kansas City area. At each LIFL event, the team is led by an experienced captain, and a police officer demonstrates how to use the lock. Opportunities to volunteer at upcoming LIFL events were announced and more will be soon.

Ann Weaver gave testimony to the positive experiences she has had volunteering at five LIFL events. Ann particularly remembers being at a baby fair where young parents who were gun owners were very receptive. She says that having a police officer demonstrate how to apply the gun lock makes it very easy for the volunteers.

GAGV Program Committee Member Julie Young introduced today's panel of area educators who discussed their perspectives and the policies at their schools on keeping students safe from gun violence: Brian Watson, principal of Tomahawk Elementary School in the Shawnee Mission School District; Nancy Sims-West, Ed.D., French and journalism teacher at Indian Woods Middle School, also in Shawnee Mission; and Scott Macek, who teaches math, social studies and science at Coronado Middle School in Kansas City, Kansas.

- What's already in place to protect students? Generally, in Shawnee Mission, doors are locked at all times, there are push button locks on the inside of classroom doors, and everyone checks in at the office. The relationships students have with teachers and counselors is also considered a security measure. In Colorado Middle School in KCK there are metal detectors for bags, and everyone goes through an x-ray machine. There is a camera at the entrance, and visitors are beeped in to the building where they are greeted by a security officer.
- Why do shootings happen? All of the educators cited similar answers: student feelings of alienation and not belonging, stress which leads to behaviors of acting out, disconnect from the community, not being able to deal with failure, lack of grit (the skill of getting back up when you've been knocked down), and pressure to succeed. Not enough social workers and counselors, and the lack of conflict resolution programs also contributes.
- What is the effect of school shootings on students? The educators expressed concern about the drills and lock downs, how real should they be? The training could be traumatic in itself, and there is a concern of desensitization.
- Should teachers be armed: The consensus was NO. Mr. Macek asked, "Where would it end? With mail carriers, doctors, trash collectors, etc.?"

Lindsay Behgam, of Mainstream Coalition's Educational Foundation encouraged GAGV to join their non-partisan Voter to Voter project to engage Kansans in a new culture of voting. They have developed an online tool to help supporters become Voting Ambassadors to people they know, to encourage them to become active, engaged voters. Mainstream won't tell anyone who to vote for, just how to vote and why it's so important. Lindsay asked GAGV members to form a team to become Ambassadors for this exciting effort. Dozens of organizations have signed up, including Village Presbyterian Church, Congregation Beth Torah, El Centro, Vibrant Health of Wyandotte, the Strawberry Hill Neighborhood Association, and more. Email Lindsay at lindsay@mainstreamcoalition.org for more information and training dates or Judy Sherry at judy@sherrymo.com to join GAGV's team.

Why is this important for GAGV? We need to help get out the vote to elect legislators who are for common sense gun laws.

Anthony Butler, CEO of V.I.P. Movement, LLC, (Violence I Prevent), treated us to a recitation of his poem, "Where Violence Comes From."

Upcoming GAGV Meetings:

July 23 – A Tale of Two Countries - Gun Laws and Culture in Japan and the U.S.

August 27 – Guns on Campus

Judy closed the meeting at 5:40 pm.

Submitted by Charlotte Davison, Secretary