



## Grandparents Against Gun Violence Meeting Minutes July 23, 2018

Our mission:

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

Judy Sherry convened the meeting at 4:06 pm at Colonial Church in Prairie Village.

Charlotte Davison welcomed new attendees and thanked those members who brought a guest. Roxana O'Hara introduced her three grandchildren who represent the children for whom we devote our time and energy.

Joan Jacobson asked for volunteers to be "conversationalists" at the Heartland Community Forum on October. 8. Conversationalists will be stationed at each table facilitating the discussion of an answer to a question over lunch. Contact Joan at [sojacobs@aol.com](mailto:sojacobs@aol.com) to volunteer.

Rebecca Matthews introduced today's meeting topic, "A Tale of Two Countries" by comparing statistics on gun deaths, gun ownership and gun laws in Japan and the United States. Among the statistics Rebecca cited were:

- Number of firearms per 100 people: Japan .06 USA 90.00
- Number of firearm deaths per 100 citizens: Japan .01 USA 3.21

The United States tops the lists of countries with the most firearms, easy access to guns and number of gun deaths. Countries with low gun deaths have multiple processes to own a gun including taking an exam, training, waiting periods, and background checks. It is not considered a right as it is in the United States. In Japan, there are 13 steps that must be taken before a gun can be purchased.

Rebecca introduced today's speakers. John Matthews, a former diplomat and political adviser, has been immersed in Japanese language and culture since his high school days. He lived in Japan and served for 20 years as Executive Assistant to the Japanese Consul in Kansas City.

John began by recognizing Breece Olander and her sister Mina Steen whose grandfather, Harry Colmery, a veteran of the WWI, was the principal architect of the GI Bill of Rights which made it possible for veterans to afford higher education and to purchase houses with low-interest mortgages.

John explained how Japanese values contribute to a peaceful country free of gun violence. While in the United States we value individuality and personal rights, the Japanese value the group. There is a system of belonging to the group, and shooting someone would bring shame upon the family. This

allows them to live in much more density without violence. 98% of the people are ethnically Japanese, share the same experiences, thoughts and cultures. In the United States, we are more diverse with immigrants and different nationalities; we don't have the same instinctive understanding of each other. In Japan, 90% think of themselves as middle class and equal financially, and there is not so much crime based on poverty. These values along with a four-month process to purchase a gun including training sessions, testing, and an interview by police limit the ability of someone who is dangerous to get a gun and reduce gun violence. There is no question that Japan's approach places a burden on those who wish to bear arms but it also limits the ability of someone who is dangerous to get a gun. John recommended the book, "Anecdotal Information on Gun Violence in Japan" by Karl Denzer.

University of Kansas professor David N. Smith, PhD, with a background in social theory, discussed how Americans' fascination with guns intersects political sociology, psychology and economics. He discussed how the manufacturing and ownership of guns in our society plays a big role in gun violence. The arms industry based in this country produces firearms for around the world. Our incomes permit gun ownership, and there is a very powerful lobby to sell guns freely and to a lot of people. The people who profit are the ones who donate to politicians and oppose gun control.

David provided a handout: "Gun Control" by Steven S. Smith showing graphs that demonstrate that most Americans favor stricter gun laws and support bans on assault weapons but are more divided when asked about protecting a right to gun ownership. He said there are more people who feel the right to bear arms is more important than gun control, but the number is close, and that's why there is possibility for a change in the conversation. If gun control is to be discussed, people who oppose it will frame it as one of rights. These differences are reflected in how the pro- and anti-gun control advocates address the issue.

In order for us to have an effective conversation, we need to listen carefully. Why does that person care? Why do gun rights matter more than all of the perils of gun violence? Those that oppose any form of gun restriction are few. The data shows there is some number of hard core who will not budge. It's a matter of deep personality. There is far less likely for room for very serious discussion with those who take the issue very seriously.

David recommends reading Richard Slotkin's trilogy about cultures of violence in the United States, particularly the third one, *Gunfighter Nation: Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America*.

Barb McNeile, coordinator of Lock It For Love, our gun safety education project, announced the program is one-year-old and thanked volunteers who helped make it a success. 39 participants have participated in 41 events, 29 in Missouri and 12 in Kansas. Twenty-six police officers have worked by our side demonstrating gun locks. 837 free gun locks have been distributed in 167 zip codes.

Linda Odell spoke of her experience with LIFL. She remembered attending a strategic planning session where it was discussed that legislative action wasn't going to work in our two states, and GAGV needed something tangible for volunteers could do. We also needed to attract more people of color to our organization, needed to increase visibility in the community and the number of supporters, and our speakers bureau needed more places to present. She realized after completing a LIFL event at

Children's Mercy Hospital that in one year GAGV has hit all of these primary objectives. Certificates of recognition were distributed to those 39 participants who were present. A cookie reception was held following the meeting.

Tom Russell presented the Pat Russell Volunteer of the Quarter Award to Gerald Hiller, Gloria Hiller and Gay Clemenson (absent), the tech team for the Heartland Community Forum as well as LIFL.

Judy reminded everyone to vote in the primaries and directed Kansas voters to GAGV's July 19<sup>th</sup>'s Meeting Notice information:

KS House Races – the Kansas Chapter of the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence recently surveyed Kansas House of Representatives candidates in Johnson County to learn their stand on three important gun-related issues.

Candidates were asked if they support or oppose:

- Expanded background checks
- Repeal of concealed campus carry
- Adoption of Extreme Risk Protection Orders, allowing temporary removal of firearms from individuals deemed by a judge to be a threat either to themselves or others.

[Here are the results](#). There are some blank spaces, because some candidates did not respond to calls and emails. For a few candidates, they could not find contact information. Unopposed candidates were not surveyed.

If you don't know your House District Number, go to [www.openstates.org](http://www.openstates.org) and type your address into the box available. Click, and it then will display the candidates on your ballot.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:40 pm.

Submitted by Charlotte Davison, Secretary