

STAND Together

February 25, 2016 Meeting

We had the biggest turn out in a long time. We had many new faces who came from the Transitioning Youth Retail Project. The young people from this program are on fire to learn about self-advocacy and what it means to stand up for yourself and others with disabilities.

The evening started off with introductions and getting to know each other. This was followed by seasoned members of the group explaining the purpose of the meeting and what the group has done in the past. We talked about how many of us have gone to Annapolis over the years to meet with our elected officials and why it is important. Aileen shared that it is important because although there are provider agencies (such as The Arc Montgomery County and others) who can send staff members to talk about issues, it is much more effective to hear from self-advocates who are actually receiving services about how their lives will be affected by the passage of a bill either positively or negatively.

There was discussion about current bills that we learned about at DD day in Annapolis on Feb. 10, when 500 people descended to learn and meet with elected officials. Next year we hope to have many of our new members join us in Annapolis for this important day.

We chose to focus on the Equal Employment Act bill that is currently a hot button issue. We talked about what a 14c certificate is and how it allows people with a disability to be employed at a lower rate than someone without disability. The discussion was very lively and informative as many talked with emotion about how wrong this is. It was also agreed that the elimination of these certificates has to be done in such a way that people are respected for their ability. We also talked about what topics are important to the group. Transportation, housing and employment were just a few that people raised.

The group also felt that we should try and do a project that gives back to the community. Some suggestions were resurrecting the St. Martin's Soup Kitchen sing-along in December also collecting toiletries for the homeless. Each member was asked to think about other projects and bring their ideas to the next meeting.

The next meeting will be:

Thursday, March 24, 2016 from 6:30-7:30 pm at St. Mark's Presbyterian Church located at 10701 Old Georgetown Road in Rockville. For those taking the bus, Ride-on bus 26 from White Flint Metro goes directly there.

Aileen O'Hare Editor-in-Chief

