

KASA CONNECTION!



Introducing the new KASA Advisory Board and Task Force Members...



Julia Grace Collins,
Task Force
Age:13, North Carolina



Danielle Fellguth,
Adv. Board
Age:16, California



Gabriel Cazares,
Adv. Board
Age: 16, Texas



Lyndsi Holmes,
Adv. Board
Age:19, New York

Not Pictured:
Derek Longwell,
Task Force
Age: 13, California

National Kids As Self Advocates (KASA) in D. C.

The first weekend in May, KASA held their annual in person Advisory Board meeting. After only knowing each other as "voices" for almost a year, Board members were finally able to put faces with names!

The meeting began a few days before the Family Voices Conference. KASA Board members had the opportunity to chat with Family Voices staff members and the Executive Director, Sophie Arao-Nguyen. The Board also spent time learning about disability pride and culture from Theresa Squires and Melinda Haus-Johnson from the Michigan Disability Rights Coalition (MDRC),



Sophie Arao-Nguyen, Family Voices Executive Director, poses with the KASA Board Members while in Washington, D.C.
(KASA Board members not pictured Emily Bill and Lyndsi Holmes)

Lots of fun was had and it was great to get to know each other, but the overall agenda was jam-packed with strategic planning activities. The Board spent the whole weekend brainstorming to come up with goals for the upcoming years. There was discussion of how KASA has changed since it began, the hopes held for the future and what will be needed to see those hopes become a reality!

At the end of the weekend the Board members left the meeting with four goals that they will continue to work on in the coming three years. These can be found in the right column.

A great deal of work was accomplished in just a few short days, and having had time to grow closer and get to know each other, the board of KASA is empowered and energized to take on the work of the coming years!

KASA's New Program Goals:

- ★ **Chapter Development**
To begin creating chapters in other states, much like the currently existing CT-KASA chapter in Connecticut.
- ★ **Advocacy & Training**
Skills and topics the Board wants to learn more about and be able to share with others.
- ★ **Disability Pride**
KASA has always included Disability Pride in what we learn and train on, but after meeting with the activists from Michigan, the KASA Board decided disability pride is something they would like to focus more on and decided to make it a strategic goal.
- ★ **Membership Involvement**
The Board decided to work on creating more ways to further involve the people who respond to KASA's topical surveys, view KASA's listserv and use KASA's website, to make them a stronger part of KASA.

If you want to be a part of KASA's success, visit our website at www.fvkasa.org. You can become a member, find helpful resources and/or make a donation today.

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National KASA Six-Month Highlights!

KASA Publications requests since Dec. 2008:

Top 5 Publications Requested...

- ★ *What is on the KASA Website?*-- 163 requests
- ★ *What is Self-Determination?*-- 84 requests
- ★ *What is Disability Culture?*--76 requests
- ★ *Medical Model vs Social Model*-- 71 requests
- ★ *Benefits of Memberships* --70 requests

Total Hardcopy Publications Requested: 845

Website Stats since Dec. 2008...

- ★ *469 Average Hits Per Day*
- ★ *18,365 Total Downloads (This includes tip-sheets, brochures, etc.)*
- ★ *35,083 Total Resource Directory Hits*

Total Web Hits/Downloads: 53,917

KASA Publications are in high demand! See why at: <http://www.fvkasa.org/resources/index.html>

Other Happenings...

- ★ KASA co-hosted a national follow-up teleconference in March '09 due to the overwhelming response from the October teleconference for over 200 people on school inclusion for youth with disabilities.
- ★ Co-presented along with Healthy Ready to Work (HRTW) at the Family Voices national conference on healthcare transition in May '09.
- ★ Participated in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) Part B Community Of Partnership meeting in May '09, sharing information about KASA's activities & resources.

Join KASA in Micah's fight to live in the dorm at Oakland University. For more information, visit: throughthesamedoor.com

Traveling to D.C.

By Micah Fialka-Feldman



I wasn't sure that I was going to go Washington D.C. for the KASA Board meeting in May. I usually am pumped up to go to these meetings because they are fun and they help me get energized to do the advocacy work. This time was different because I had to travel to the meeting alone, and my 92 year old grandfather, Ralph had just had a heart attack and was in the hospital. I was feeling sad and I wanted to stay home to be close to my family. Then I decided I had to go because I knew my KASA friends

would understand my feelings. I knew I could talk with them. I knew I had a responsibility to go to the meeting because I was the co-chair and had to lead the meeting. It was hard but I got through it.

Once I got to D.C. I was focused on the meeting. It was a good meeting because I got to meet the other KASA Board members who I only knew from talking on the phone. It was cool and nice. We talked about KASA's strategic plan for the next three years. KASA has helped me and lots of other young people to know how to do a plan. It took a lot of hours talking but we now have four strategic goals.

I think face to face KASA Board meetings are very important to have because we can do better work. We can be stronger to make change for people with disabilities. I feel very proud and happy to be on the KASA Board. I hope we can have more face-to-face KASA Board meetings in the future...

Pictured above are Micah and Mallory, KASA Adv. Board Co-chairs

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KASA Task Force Taking Charge

The KASA Task Force has been extremely busy over the past six months. One of their greatest tasks that they completed a draft of the Paraprofessional Toolkit. The Task Force has also been busy reviewing tip-sheets on issues such as voting, Centers for Independent Living, and using the public bus system. On each conference call, the Task Force educates themselves on disability history/culture and pride.

When asked what it was like being a co-chair, Justin Louchart responded, "It has been absolutely splendid!" The Task Force has many new projects underway. The current members of the KASA Task Force include Justin Louchart, Co-Chair; Emily Bill, Co-Chair; Julia Grace Collins, Tyler Greene, Kelsie Cain, Jessica Schwartz, Sarah Sims, and Derek Longwell.

KASA Keynote Address: Nervous, Yet Successful

Recently, Jennifer Thomas, KASA Project Consultant, interviewed KASA Board Member Hamza Jaka about his recent trip to Rhode Island. Hamza presented at the NEPACT Regional Conference, and he worked with the Rhode Island Parent Information Network to coordinate the trip. The title of his keynote address was *Youth Leadership/Youth Advocacy*. Below is a selection from the interview.

Jennifer: Well Hamza, I'm glad that you made it back from Rhode Island. What was it like being there?

Hamza: It was a lot of fun. The staff was very helpful and made me feel comfortable. The scenery in Rhode Island was wonderful.

Jennifer: How did the presentation go?

Hamza: Though I was really nervous, the presentation went incredibly well! I made several connections. There was only one negative review out of 70.

Jennifer: Wow, Hamza! That's awesome! How did it feel, as a young person and a Board Member, being the keynote speaker and discussing youth leadership/advocacy?

Hamza: I was honored. I was happy, but I was scared. This was my first solo presentation.

Jennifer: Was this your first time acting as a keynote speaker?

Hamza: Yes, it was. I knew that I was a reflection on my fellow Board Members and other youth. I didn't want to let them down and felt it was important to incorporate disability pride.

Jennifer: Why was it important to you to include disability pride in your presentation?

Hamza: It's important for young people with disabilities to be comfortable with who they are. Being proud of my disability is the reason I'm here today.

Picture: Hamza, Danielle and Mallory at the National KASA Adv. Board Meeting



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CT-KASA

The Connecticut KASA state chapter is on the move. In May, three of the members traveled to Washington, D.C. to attend the Family Voices Conference. While there, they were able to meet with KASA Adv. Board Members.

Also in May, four CT-KASA chapter members presented on "pediatric to adult healthcare" in their state. This was done with the Department of Public Health.

The CT-KASA chapter has become very project-focused. Pediatric to adult healthcare is a very important topic to CT-KASA. As a result, many of their current projects and activities center on this issue.

Get Your Pocket Guide Today!



KASA's *How to be Involved in a Board or Council: Roles & Responsibilities Pocket Guide* is now available!! The pocket guide covers:

- ★ Getting involved in your community
- ★ Roles and responsibilities
- ★ How to be prepared
- ★ Tips to deal with what might be hard
- ★ Suggestions for working with adults

And much more!

These pocket guides were just released in April, and 52 have already been ordered! Get yours while supplies last.

Thank You Donors!

Donors make things happen, and KASA wants to thank the many donors who have helped KASA to be able to continue the work we do for young people with disabilities! Our Theory of Change says, "Young people with disabilities will have control over their own lives and futures. This will be achieved through: informing youth about their rights, providing peer support and training, and changing systems to include us." Because of the donations that we receive, KASA is able to:


- ★ heighten awareness of issues important to youth,
- ★ represent the youth voice at conferences, hearings, etc.,
- ★ develop, print and distribute information that is important to youth with disabilities,
- ★ obtain input from youth all over the nation,
- ★ and spread disability history/culture and pride.

Donors help to make all of these things, and so much more, possible. **KASA wants to thank all of the donors who support our work. Thank you for helping us to make our Theory of Change a reality!**

KASA has over 60 youth written tip sheets and resource guides on our website – all written for youth. KASA speaks at conferences and provides training to youth and adult organizations on a variety of different topics. Check it all out at www.fvkasa.org

**Interested in becoming a KASA member? For a small fee (and FREE for youth) you can receive a lifetime membership to KASA where you will get a monthly listserv full of information and resources, discounts on materials, become part of a national network speaking out on youth disability issues and much more! Check out all of the benefits at: <http://www.fvkasa.org/benefits.html>
Become a KASA member today!**

Note: This newsletter was written and put together by the KASA Adv. Board's membership committee and KASA youth consultants.

KASA is a youth run project of Family Voices 

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