

Rochester School for the Deaf

Parent-Staff Association

March 3, 2011

Special PSA Meeting

6:37 PM

Dr. Mowl gave a short presentation explaining the lobbying efforts of the RSD group consisting of 8 students, 4 staff, and a few parents, for Advocacy Day, March 2, in Albany, NY. The group met with more than 70 legislators. Two weeks ago he met more than 50 legislators and there are several more legislators to meet with before April 1. The support from the legislators has been wonderful but the big concern is the economy here in NYS. He explained two things...1) cost-shifting of money, and 2) responsibility shifted to school districts which are unfamiliar with disabled students' needs. Dr. Mowl felt that Gov. Cuomo was going ahead with his budget proposal, without taking out the part about 4201 schools. He emphasized the importance of the legislators' power to take out the part about 4201 schools from the proposal. He also expressed his pride in Paul Norris' online petition effort.

Dr. Mowl was pleased to see awareness spreading on the plight of 4201 school, through social networks, such as Facebook, Deafread, and Twitter, especially now that America is watching NYS, 4201 Schools are hoping that the pressure of people's knowledge of 4201 schools will help Gov. Cuomo to make an amendment to his proposed budget. Dr. Mowl mentioned that Gov. Cuomo may not be close to the budget, however people under him do have a better understanding of the consequences and would tell him that his plan for 4201 schools was wrong.

Dr. Mowl added that the students did a great job. RSD students and students from other 4201 schools were introduced on the Assembly floor, and that it was a positive experience for them to see government in action.

About the March 10 Rally: Dr. Mowl said that there would be 3 buses leaving Rochester for Albany... 3 buses from Buffalo and that he expected a good crowd, more than 500 people.

A parent asked about the legal actions if 4201 proposal was passed. Dr. Mowl said he had not arrived at that point yet, but he stressed two things: 4201 Schools should be treated like other public schools in receiving a 7 percent budget cut. And, 4201 School setting up a task force committee to look over the facts and finances of 4201 schools and make recommendations. Dr. Mowl also said that there was a clause in NYS Constitution stating that the NYS legislature by law must make provisions for disabled childrens' education, and if Gov. Cuomo did away with 4201 Schools he may be violating the NYS Constitution.

A parent/a teacher asked about another cause group showing up at the Rally on March 10, will we have to share our stage with them. He said that's possible, pointing out that there were many cause groups mingling around Albany at state budget time.

He ended his presentation with the statement... "We will be seen. We will be heard. We will take a stand!"

Nancy Heaney: She is talking with 4201 Schools lobbyists Heather and Jim and making preparations for the rally for 4201 schools. So far, the schools are to bring their own school flags, wear their school's colors (we are to wear blue and orange for RSD), perform a skit showing our pride and spirit in RSD, and take turns giving short presentations to the crowd. We need to show our serious demeanor... not be hostile, also not cheerful... just show our determination, concern, seriousness.

A parent asked about restrooms and Nancy said that the busses have them and the buildings in Albany where we will be do have restrooms also.

About banners: RSD made 8 banners, 8 feet long. People are welcome to bring their own posters and banners, however no wooden sticks, poles are allowed. Again, best to wear blue and orange clothes, to symbolize our school. She talked about getting t-shirt but decided against it because they'd not be visible especially if we wore coats over them.

A parent asked about making a video and Nancy said that there were several video cameras there, and it's likely we'd be broadcast on TV news statewide.

Asked about parking... especially if anyone decided to drive in their own car instead of going on the bus: Peter Artinian said that finding a parking lot in Albany would be a challenge. There are several paid parking lots for all day parking, \$25. Half day, \$12. Not sure about hourly rate. The buses already have their own reserved parking slots, so it is best to sign up for the bus transportation.

About short presentation from people... hoping for RSD alumni to come so that they could give short testimonies on how RSD helped them to become productive citizens.

Nancy said that the goal is to bring more awareness of our cause to the legislators... encourage the legislators to come to the rally, to take notice of our concerns, etc. She stressed that the lobbyists assisting 4201 Schools were important because they listen to our concerns and pass the information to the legislators' offices.

A parent asked if they could visit their district legislators after the rally and Nancy advised against it, since the legislators have their schedules and were extremely busy.

A parent asked if more information about the rally would be posted on RSD's website and she said yes...just contact Frank, the PR person at RSD.

Nancy explained that the RSD group on March 2 handed out brochures that the group and the school staff stayed up most of the night to create and print. Also, handed out the DVD that the high school students created, giving thanks to Kim Kotel, a high school English teacher. One parent asked if there were photos of all children from ECC to high school, not just high school and that all of the students

needed to be represented on the DVD. Nancy said that the group did discuss all the grades. One teacher said that usually at the end of school year a PowerPoint of the photos is shown, so best that we ask the teachers for the photos.

A secretary for RSDAA said that she had e-mails of RSD alumni in which they shared information about 4201 schools' plight and the March 10 rally.

Nancy urged that when making banners, we list the benefits of 4201 schools...be positive.

Anthony DiGiovanni: So far, 86 people have signed up; filling 2 buses. The buses will leave at 5 AM. So people who signed up for bus transportation are encouraged to show up at 4:30 AM, have coffee and bagels at RSD's cafeteria. Park behind the soccer field, entering Gate A. Board the buses by 5 AM and leave RSD campus by 5:15 AM. It'll be a 3 ½ hour drive, with a pul-lover in Syracuse to pick up a group of people.

There is a 3rd bus, for the community who want to join the rally. It will leave from Marketplace Mall. For the community bus, 42 people have signed up. Hope for more to sign-up... even though the deadline was Feb. 29, we are willing to accept more... until Monday, March 7.

Clothing... expect to be outside, so dress accordingly to the weather...likely will be cold, maybe snow, rain. Just dress wisely and warmly. The buses have bathrooms .

Schools will bring their own interpreters (2 interpreters per school) and Albany will provide interpreters also.

The rally will be from 10 AM to 11:30 AM. At 11:30 AM, lunch will be provided. For anyone in the meeting not yet signed up, sign up after the meeting. Sign up forms on the table.

To/from Albany we stop briefly at a rest area, Thruway service area.

Hoping for up to 1000 people... averaging 100 people from each school and more from schools' communities. More buses will be provided as needed.

The buses should be back in Rochester by 5:30 PM.

Encouraged parents to make banners with their children.

A parent asked about donations... AD said that RSD got a few donations already; ESAD donated \$500, DEAR \$100. To donate, make a note on the check to RSD that the donations go to RSD 4201 Campaign.

A parent asked about food... snacks and drinks for children. AD said please bring them also.

A teacher: About the brochures that the RSD group created...can we put them in the envelopes and send them out to the legislators and anyone.... Explaining our points... showing what would happen if

4201 budget proposal was passed, using three groups of people... teachers, parents, and students... point of views.

Karen Mayes is posting the info on RSD PSA Facebook. Frank is informing TV and newspapers. Special thanks to Paul Norris for the online petition... so far @3100 people have signed it. Check DeafNYAction.com for updates and the online petition would continue over this month.

Peter Artinian, Vice President: PSA business on hold until next month, April 4. The March 7 PSA meeting is cancelled.

Old Business: PSA Scholarship deadline is March 31... so far only one application is received.

New Business: None.

RSD will NEVER close!

Adjourned at 7:45 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Mayes

PSA Secretary