

NASC 2007 Reports

Nine delegates attended the NASC Conference in Kansas City in June 2007. Two students participated from East High School, which is the host of the AASG Fall Conference: Alivia Hernandez and Mackenzie Stratton; two from Juneau Douglas High School, which is hosting the Spring 2008 Conference: Kimberly Burke and Margaret Rehfield; Tony Glavinic from Steller; Mt. Edgecumbe students Megan Waggoner (Palmer), PR Officer for AASG, and Abel Hopson-Suvlu (Barrow); Karlo Mercene, past Executive Board member, from Barrow; and Katrina Nore, President of AASG. Two adults served as advisors: Bob Waters and Carol Waters.

This is the compilation of their responses to questions about NASC 2007. Their thoughtful sharing highlighted many wonderful experiences and will also help NASC and AASG put on even better conferences.

We hope that you enjoy reading these comments, and will encourage YOU to go to NASC 2008!

1. What did you learn?

Alivia: I learned that teenagers all over the United States have so much in common. No matter where anyone comes from we all have dreams, hopes and fears. We all have trouble with school spirit and all strive for excellence. There is so much that we all had to learn from each other. I learned that as a generation we are all driven and care more about, not only our own futures but also those of America as a whole. I learned that our country is headed in a wonderful direction. My time at NASC was truly unforgettable and I will cherish the relationships I built and the memories that were made.

Karlo: One thing I learned that I'm sure I will never forget is that the "R" word (retarded), whenever and how ever used, discriminates the mentally disabled. I learned that to the mentally handicapped and their families, this simple word is the most hateful word in the English dictionary. I got some pretty cool service projects and fundraising ideas for my student council to try. Oooh, I also learned that I'm a good navigator :) Even ask Carol. :)

Megan: I learned so much from the importance of the Special Olympics to the involvement of student councils and states from across the nation. I learned that the heat and humidity in Kansas does not partner well with a black shirt. I learned that no matter what state you are from; friendships can be formed. I learned that even with bad dance music, A LOT of teens, and the lights on a dance can still be very fun. But I think most off all I learned that teens from across the nation and even outside of the nation are doing really amazing things to make where we live a better place.

Bob and Carol: Serendipitous experiences often turn out to be the best, for instance, the Garrison Keillor happenstance in the Airport, leading to us having dinner with the Prairie Home Companion cast, being on stage for the show in front of 7000 at the Starlight Theatre, and just hanging out with the Chocolate Drops! Mimi's Restaurant for Breakfast! Having students as navigators. That networking with other advisors and students is enjoyable because I met people from all over the US who had a common interest.

Katrina: I learned that no matter how you may think that one person doesn't make a difference, we really can. I learned that a bunch of teens that can dance all night long can band together and put on a state wide Special Olympics, which were amazing, and learn that disabilities don't make people disabled. I learned that each state has many differences in how they run their state conferences, including many not actually having business meetings like we do as a whole state.

Margaret: What I learned from NASC, like Tony, is that it doesn't make leaders it inspires us to go out and inspire others to lead. I know after the conference I had a whole bunch of ideas for the AASG in Juneau next spring. I also just wanted to go out and start doing all sorts of things. I was motivated to go and lead.

Mackenzie: I learned a great deal from this conference about leadership and interaction with others. The workshops that I attended discussed leadership skills like listening and how body language really expresses a lot about how you feel about something, or how much you care about that particular topic. Another workshop I went to discussed icebreakers. When leading a group of people, introductions are important just to bring a group to a more personal and friendly level. Icebreakers are a great way to kick off any gathering of people unfamiliar with each other. I learned a lot about myself and how I interact with people.

I learned the most the day we celebrated people with disabilities and shared with them in an experience that I will never in my life forget. The athletes were so excited to be there, so excited to have an opportunity to play sports and participate in fun activities, celebrating the athletes as people. It was so heart warming.

Tony: I learned that NASC doesn't create leaders - it motivates people who are either leaders already or those who have potential to go back and do something in their communities. I also learned a bit on how to conduct workshops based on mistakes and lacking areas as well as well-facilitated sections observed in those I attended.

2. How are you going to use what you learned, both in terms of the AASG Conferences and school student councils, and in your personal life? What would you like to see at the AASG conferences that you experienced at NASC?

Alivia: I would love, more than anything in the world, for the students attending East High's AASG to exude half of the spirit that surged at NASC! I want the conference to ensure a good time had by all. I want to make sure that everyone is comfortable and if anyone has any problems what-so-ever that there is a place or group of people they can approach and something will be done about it. (I hope that's clear)

Karlo: Well, I haven't used the "R" word since I learned what it could mean to other people. I think AASG could really use a keynote speakers like John Beede and Saoren Palumbo, the guy who just graduated from high school and talked about his sister and the banning of the "R" word. Megan: As far as AASG goes I definitely hope to apply my basic knowledge of the conference in hopes to raise the size of the Alaska delegation for next year. I really found the guest speakers inspiring and motivational and I think AASG could use motivational speakers a little more often at conferences. When it comes to my student council I hope that we can form a service project around Special Olympics or another type project.

Bob and Carol: At this conference I was reminded many times about how much fun I have with students who have positive attitudes and go with the flow! I think that I would like to meet with the students before we go to the conference and listen to their expectations to help plan for the pre-conference and conference.

Katrina: I think that I will definitely use the Special Olympics experience in my school, and see if I can get that started, with a partner program. As far as AASG goes, I plan on encouraging others to attend NASC, as well as push more projects for AASG and in my home school; because I know that a small group of people can do anything. Though I am a senior, I will do my best to apply all the words of the motivational speakers, like "Climb on" or "Motivate yourself" in my life and school.

Margaret: I know for the Juneau conference I am going to try and use one of the speakers from NASC who will be up in Alaska next April anyways, John Beede. How I will use what I learned is that I want to get involved with Special Olympics in my town and get involved. That was truly an awesome day and I was so excited to participate in it.

Mackenzie: I learned some really awesome icebreakers that I will definitely share with workshop leaders. On a more serious note, the NASC conference had some amazing organizational skills to make the week fun for the 1400+ people attended. All though the East conference will be on a much smaller scale, there are still some things that I will keep in mind and suggest to the group, such as the cards for the workshops. Everyone had a card telling them where to go and what they should be doing. This made it easy for everyone with little confusion about where delegates were supposed to be.

Tony: I will use workshop skills in presenting workshops at GLSEN conferences, as well as rely on different aspects of the conference in planning summits for other groups in the future. At AASG: workshops taught by students - but better prepared than the ones offered at NASC.

3. Best parts of the experience - awesome stuff?

Alivia: My host family and host sisters were absolutely the best I could have ever asked for! The family was caring, and they had an amazing home! The girls I stayed with were so lively and we got along

splendidly! I loved the ball and visiting KU, the campus was gorgeous! I liked being able to talk to students that attend the university and hear about their lives.

Karlo: The whole experience was awesome. The zoo; camel ride. The Prairie Home Companion. Getting lost. Carol taking us to Starbucks because Karlo was an awesome navigator. :)

Megan: Oh where do I start? I guess when I first got to Kansas and I saw Garrison Keillor that was really fun. The camel riding at the zoo! Meeting all of those teens from across the nation was amazing. Unlike AASG, I didn't get to form those friendships I feel are long lasting but I met some really fun and awesome people. Bobby Jo Wawa...what gets more awesome than that? I even have to say all of the driving around, getting lost, was a really good time!

Bob and Carol: Garrison experience, pre-conference, traveling to museums and getting lost and then finding our way, listening to the cheers of AK contingent, having Morgan as our state guide, candle lighting, Spec Olympics activities (esp. young man who talked about his sister), Dr. Atkins as the MC for conference – a fabulous speaker who connected with the audience!

Katrina: I think the best parts of NASC had to be going to a conference with twice the amount of kids that are in my school, and the amusement park. I got to go on my first roller coasters and loved them, it was awesome. I really loved the Special Olympics, and as Margaret knows, I was practically asked out by Cole during them. Another competitor who I don't know the name just randomly came and placed his arm around me and told me I was beautiful, which was amazing. I enjoyed the majority of it, and made a couple friends that I am keeping in touch with, especially those from the presidents meetings, because those were the kids I was around most.

Margaret: Best part. Well, what wasn't there to be the best. It started with meeting Garrison Keillor, then going on the show; then the conference started and everything. The best part would have to be, the home stay. I thought it was awesome to stay in a house with 4 other girls, and we were all from different parts of the country. There were 3 of us from the west coast and other 2 were from the east coast. Our house stay parents were really nice too.

Mackenzie: My favorite part of the conference would have to be the bonds and friendships I built while I was there. There were so many opportunities to meet new people during lunch time and especially in those first few days when we were able to meet people through the pin swapping. Everyone was just so friendly and wanting to meet people from all over. I had never been to a major conference like this and I truly have made some lifelong friends. The hospitality of the host families was so wonderful. Even though we didn't spend a lot of time with them it was just so cool that families in Kansas would open their homes up to complete strangers with open arms and warm faces.

Tony: KC zoo
Prairie Home Companion
Host family

4. Shirt and cheer ideas for next year in Texas: "Hats off to leadership" is the theme.

Alivia: I really liked all of the shirts that spoofed their state. It shows that they are proud of their state, even its imperfections. We should definitely have some sort of shirt that shows how much bigger Alaska is than Texas. That would be hilarious! We should ensure that everyone going knows our state song, that's only kind of important! ☺ ;-)

p.s. I don't care if I'm graduating! I'M COMIN' TO TEXAS! Muahahahaha

Karlo: For shirts, I think something like the Barrow AASG shirt. I think people would really like those. As for cheers, I would suggest to keep the "Hey Alaska how do you feel?...grunt...Alaska style." (I got that one from HOBY). Other states used the same cheer, but they didn't do the 'Alaska style' part so everyone thought it was funny.

Megan: MOOSE HATS! Also, I think we need to have t shirts that we designed and are a lighter color. If we move on it sooner we can make shirts for every day we are there...and make them very witty and cool

Bob and Carol: A hat with moose antlers (the theme is Hats off to Leadership), keep shirts simple, light colors because it so hot. Hope we have students like you who got the shirts, so many pins, and other cool stuff to trade!

Katrina: I think that we should do something with igloos or it always apparently being cold, because that's what everyone thought at NASC. Just like Idaho made a bunch of shirts with potatoes, we are infamous for living in igloos. I am not sure how to incorporate the theme, but I hope you all have fun next year.

Margaret: We need more tee shirts! Maybe design tee's like other states did, as well as bring some from the shops. For the cheers we need everyone to cheer and learn them so we can be extra loud!

Mackenzie: I think it would be great to be a little more creative with shirt designs and maybe try and get a screen company to sponsor or donate some screens so that we are able to still keep the prices down but so it allows us to be more unique in our patterns and shirt designs. As far as cheers go, figure out a way to make sure everyone knows them and is excited about them. I think with cheering, it also helps a lot to have a large number of people.

Tony: Definitely make our own shirts for the conference - or at least add the NASC logo or something. Moose hats would be good.

5. What suggestions for next year's delegates re the conference?

Alivia: Have fun; make friends, DON'T BE AFRAID TO SPEAK YOUR MIND! However, always remember to take some time and listen as well. I wish I would have taken a moment or two to really soak in my surroundings. Bring business cards to exchange so you can keep in touch.

Karlo: Be very enthusiastic. You don't have to be a really cheery person, but always join your state delegation when they're doing cheers. Every voice counts. Like....seriously. Imagine a delegation of nine cheering from one hallway, then a delegation of 120 comes out of another hallway doing their cheer. Be cool. NASC is a fun experience, don't listen to some delegates who get really mean because Alaska's the biggest state...*cough Texas*. Bring a lot of cool Alaska shirts and cool Alaskan things to trade. And don't forget to prepare for the weather.

Megan: I think make your tickets early and check with Texas when you should leave. I got my paperwork late so that kind of messed me up. Also, I think everyone should be on the same flight in order to halt chaos and increase bonding time! Next years delegates need to be ready for an energized week and have a lot of Alaskan people.

Bob and Carol: Start early with organizing what to bring, maybe have a t-c with the delegates to connect beforehand (include parents if they want to, and get questions answered and offer suggestions). For the t-c include some of the delegates from this year to offer ideas and expertise. Get all delegates on board early.

Katrina: I think that you should definitely have a bunch of t-shirts, or anything with Alaska on it; a kid from Maryland would have probably traded anything for the lanyard that I had with Alaska on it. I would also, whoever becomes president, make sure that all the connections are right, because sometimes the people in the airport won't check your baggage all the way through. I think that all of next years delegates should have at least one teleconference to go over cheers, or start a thread on the forum to post potential cheers for kids to memorize, that might have helped.

Margaret: The conference is in Texas in June so...be prepared for really hot weather. Be willing to go into a crowd and make presence that you are an Alaskan and proud of it! Be known.

Mackenzie: It was really great to have the pre-conference this year because it helped to bond everyone together. I also feel it would be great to have one person, or even more then one that hosts a workshop. I

thought it was great that all the workshops were taught by our peers and feel it would be awesome to have an Alaska delegate willing to do that take part in teaching a workshop.

Tony: Bring any extra shirts you have.

Make sure you have plenty of pins - and anything else Alaskan that someone could possibly want.

6. What would have made the preconf. or conference better for you?

Alivia: **THE FOOD!!!** I have never been so incredibly malnourished in my entire life. They make a huge deal during registration about specifying any food preferences/allergies and they still failed to even acknowledge the fact that a good portion of the population of which they were catering to does NOT consume meat.

Example #1: The food that was served at Worlds of Fun was hotdogs and fried chicken

Example #2: The food served on the KU campus before the candle ceremony was fried chicken

Example #3: The night of our community ball the main course was barbeque beef

Example #4: All the vegetarian wraps for lunch on the second day were frozen

I was disgusted at the fact that I was expected to live off of bread, cheese corn and potato chips my entire stay at the conference. And not to mention poor, poor Mckenzie!!! The girl obviously made it clear that she was allergic to EVERYTHING under the sun. The least the administration could have done was act like they cared.

Karlo: I had a lot of fun during the pre-conference. I think the pre-conference is a good way for the Alaskan delegates to get to know each other before getting to know delegates from other states.

Megan: I think if I got in at the same time and left at the same time it would have been better for me, but really nothing could have made it better!

Bob and Carol: Plan so that all delegates come at the same time for the preconf. The trip was really awesome!

Katrina: I think that if there had been a definite plan before hand, and if we had maps prior to heading out, the preconf might have been smoother. I think that if all the delegates had also come in together it would have cut time from driving back and forth to the airport, though I understand that it was necessary. I think the conference would have been better for me if I had known what to expect, but I was just thrown into things, and had no clue what to do.

Margaret: As excited as I was for the conference to start, I wish that we had had a little more preconference time. I think I only knew two or three other people from my own delegate before the trip, so I wish I could have gotten to know everyone else a little better before the conference started. But everything was just awesome.

Mackenzie: I really had a great time with both the pre-conference and the conference but it would have been cool to have some shopping time. Living in Alaska, shopping is limited so it is always nice to do when traveling to a new place.

Tony: Earlier communication from NASC about everything - everything seemed to come late, if at all

7. How to sell the NASC conference to students for next year? What would you tell them in an elevator speech (50 words or less, to be said in less than a minute - like when on an elevator?)

Alivia: My thoughts have always been the one on one approach. I think any of the students that even speak to any of us that went on the conference would be interested in going. I can communicate my thoughts best when I am addressing a crowd or people directly. If we merely put signs and snippets of our activities and experiences no one will actually be interested because they are only words. Pictures of us taking part in all the conference offered would be great. All interested attendees should know how great it is for networking. When I heard about NASC I thought it was going to be strict leadership training and

non-stop meetings. Students should know that along with the learning experience comes massive loads of fun too. In no way was this conference just another boring lecture about how we need to be. The conference is about using our skills to inspire others, not only through high school, but through out our entire lives.

Karlo: Well, during the long, long, long, long ride home from Worlds of Fun, Kimberly and I talked about how the delegates from this year should host a NASC workshop at the Spring Conference. We could use the pictures we took to show them how fun NASC was for us.

Megan: There are some opportunities that are way too good to pass up and attending a NASC conference is one of them. I don't think you necessarily go to NASC to learn how to become a leader, I think that is what AASG is for. Attending NASC motivates you into making change. At NASC you are given the resources and tools to take back home and make that change. It is so inspiring to be around so many spirited, energized, leaders.

Bob and Carol: We can sell the conf by the delegates talking up the experience at school and at the AASG conferences. And presenting at their school boards and showing the pictures in PP. Telling about it early and often so students sign up in Feb/March. Having the info and our comments and pics on the web page.

Katrina: NASC is a huge conference full of high school students that are just as eager to change the world as you. It is a wonderful experience where you will hear incredible motivational speakers who *will* inspire you to be a better person, and to change who you are and make the school better.

Margaret: NASC is an awesome opportunity to meet thousands of students from all over the states and Puerto Rico. It may not be what you expected from AASG but you will still have fun and afterwards you will be motivated to go out and change the world. I know I have been motivated. I was before but the conference gave me a little nudge and pushed me into the direction of my own conference.

Mackenzie: NASC is great experience that every student council and student government member should experience. An amazing week filled with fun excitement and the creation of lifelong friends from all over the nation. Don't miss this awesome opportunity and be a part of NASC 2008 in Justin, Texas, next June!

8. What did you do to prepare for the conference and would you do anything different if you had the experience to do over?

Alivia: I most definitely would have brought more trading items. I would have liked to have had more communication and knowledge about my host family as well as the schedule of events for the entire conference and an earlier notice of when I could pick my classes. Or, an earlier notice about the entire conference in general would have been helpful I found out I was going very last moment, as if I was a last resort. That wasn't appreciated.
All in all.....IT WAS A BLAST!!!
Thanks everyone!

Megan: First, I would have had my confirmation materials sent to my house and not my school! I would also have not left my trading pins in my car! And finally, pack for the weather...it really is hot!

Bob: I contacted many legislators for pins, took care of rentals and hotel reservations, I contacted Chambers of Commerce for info on KC and Overland. I went to driving school so I would be a safe driver for the pre-conference. Came with a positive attitude about doing the conference.

Katrina: I didn't do much, and even forgot to sign up for workshops, though I wasn't sent the forms. I think if I could do it over I would get different shirts to trade, mine weren't that appealing. As far as preparing, I made sure I had all my itineraries, and had picked up the pins, and I made cards to attach to the pins, saying which state I was from.

Margaret: I wish I had time to look up the workshops and pick them. It was fun getting a surprise for them but at the same time I wanted to sign up for a few of the choices.

Mackenzie: I didn't really do much to prepare for the conference and I had no idea what to expect, but it really was great to get the hint to bring pins and shirts to trade because I ended up with some great stuff to take home with me.

Tony: Bring more stuff to trade.