



Homeschool Alumni Reaching Out

"Renewing and transforming homeschooling from within."

www.hareachingout.org

May 7, 2014

To the GHC Board:

Yesterday, on Tuesday, May 6, Homeschool Alumni Reaching Out (HARO) was informed by Kim McMillan that you have denied R.L. Stollar, HARO's Executive Director, entry as a speaker and exhibitor at the 2014 Great Homeschool Convention in Ontario, California. We are dismayed about this decision in light of the fact that on Friday, May 2, Kim told us that, because you "had a speaker cancel due to family issues," "I can add a session for you on our schedule."

HARO was extraordinarily grateful for this opportunity. Being told that a session would be added for us on your schedule, we reached out to our 2,000+ community of homeschool parents, alumni, and current students and launched a public fundraiser to crowd-source funding for our exhibitor fee and traveling and lodging expenses for the event. The response was overwhelmingly positive and supportive. In less than 48 hours we raised \$1,340 (which was 107% of our stated goal). Over 30 people donated to us, one of which is a current GHC speaker who supports HARO's mission.

On Friday, May 2, after being told by Kim she could add a session for us on the schedule, we specifically told Kim that we would need to do a fundraiser. We sent a follow-up email on Sunday, May 4, asking again about payment in light of the need for a fundraiser to make the payment. On Tuesday, May 6, we sent a third email, informing her we had raised enough funds at that point to make the \$250 deposit. It was several hours after that that Kim informed us we would not, in fact, have a spot at the convention. We believe this to be highly unprofessional. If we were not in fact given a session, or if there was additional vetting that needed to take place, we would have greatly appreciated this information prior to launching our fundraiser on Monday, when Kim at that point had two emails from us informing her we were doing so. We specifically waited until Monday at noon in case Kim had any follow-up information.

In light of all this, we earnestly ask you, the GHC board, to reconsider your denial of a spot to HARO at the Ontario convention. The statement on GHC's "About Us" page states that, "...we do not require that an attendee, speaker or exhibitor 'affirm' their agreement to our own Statement of Faith. Similarly, whereas we may not schedule a speaker or approve an exhibitor that is specifically 'anti-Christian'—we do have Speakers and Exhibitors that are not specifically 'Christian' but that DO provide knowledge, information and/or curriculum that is applicable and valuable for homeschoolers, both Christian and non-Christian alike. Accordingly, you should also note that we do not necessarily endorse everything you may find in the Exhibit Hall or that you may hear in a Seminar or Workshop session."

This seems to be counter to the board's refusal to allow us to participate, especially after being invited to do so and beginning our fundraiser. Homeschool Alumni Reaching Out provides knowledge, information and/or curriculum that is applicable and valuable for homeschoolers, both Christian and non-Christian alike. The majority of our board members are Christians. The majority of our board members also had positive homeschooling experiences.

HARO aims to equip homeschooling parents and communities with vitally important information about how to address issues like child abuse and mental health. R.L. Stollar's presentation — which is almost

complete, with 8,000 of 10,000 words written — is specifically focused on these very issues. It is intended to be an empowering and encouraging message to parents. We would be happy to submit a draft of the speech to the board to review, in the event that you are willing to reconsider your decision in this matter. We believe you will find it helpful, gracious, and uplifting.

Should you, the board, be unwilling to reconsider, we kindly ask for a written explanation about why the board refused to let us participate even after we were offered the opportunity and began raising money. At the very least we owe it to our donors and community specific reasons for why we are no longer welcome. Please know that, while we will have to speak about this publicly in order to notify our donors and supporters (for transparency's sake), we will of course refrain from speaking about GHC negatively. Our goal is to develop partnerships from within homeschooling. However, please also know that we cannot control what larger media outlets who are still attuned to behavior from the homeschooling community might say about the board's reversal. We urge you to consider how this looks bad for GHC — refusing access to an organization bringing awareness to child abuse and mental health when your policy is publicly open and we are clearly neither anti-Christian or anti-homeschooling.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to receiving a prompt response.

Sincerely,

The HARO Board