

Education **Matters**
Advocacy **Matters**
Support **Matters**

OAC Members
MATTER



Sarah Bramblette (right) poses with OAC Board Member Michelle Vicari (left) at the Walk from Obesity hosted during the Your Weight Matters Inaugural Convention.

The Part I Want: **Advocate**

by Sarah Bramblette, OAC Member since 2012

“Dress for the part you want, not the part you have.”

Stunned by what I heard, I sat silently in disbelief. My emotions went from feelings of hurt to anger to frustration. Well-meaning advice? Or veiled discrimination?

Here was my question: “What skills and experiences should I focus on improving in order to advance in the company?”

That reply was the FIRST and only piece of advice and sounded as if I was being judged on my appearance, not on my skills or talents. My appearance equated to my weight. I am super morbidly obese; I have lipedema and lymphedema, conditions that cause excess adipose tissue and lymph fluid to accumulate in my arms and legs. The hurt, anger and frustration stemmed from years of challenges I had overcome in order to be a contributing member of society and yet, once again I found I was being discriminated against based on my weight.

Throughout my life, my weight did not matter, that is, I never let my weight keep me from doing what I wanted or being the person I was. I learned to accommodate for my weight, and I did so very well. In school, I was in plays, band, choir, traffic scout, after school activities, talented and gifted program and had many friends. I walked to school, played outside, rode my bike, and I had a paper route. Looking back, I had few negative experiences related to my weight, and the few I did have, I easily brushed off as non-important.

However, as my weight increased it became more difficult to accommodate. During college, I weighed more than 400 pounds. It became more difficult to walk across campus, and I found myself not going to classes located in buildings too difficult to walk to or find comfortable seating. While I was excelling in many leadership positions on campus, my grades and academic progress were

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I look back at that first experience of weight bias in the workplace as a positive experience, a much needed catalyst for change in my life. Years later, I met and thanked the man who had me fired.”

to manage it. I had a professional job and a future full of goals and dreams.

I cannot say the same for the most recent incident. More than 10 years later, I sat there with two college degrees, years of professional experience, management experience and leadership experience. My only weakness is I had recently changed careers from higher education to healthcare administration. I was willing and eager to learn. I was seeking feedback, so I could expand my skillset. My performance review ranked me as meeting above expectations but also mentioned that if I wanted to advance I needed to have a more “professional appearance.” I believe I dressed professionally, despite the challenges faced being plus- sized and sensitivity in my arms and legs. However, to show I was serious about wanting to advance I changed my attire, and I was still passed up for a promotion. I could no longer stand by and tolerate this action against me. Sadly, the more I stood up for myself the harder they tried to knock me down.

On a positive note, this experience motivated me to get involved with the Obesity Action Coalition. I knew my story was powerful, and could help support the advocacy of ending weight bias in the workplace. I want to reinforce that a person’s weight has no relation to the quality of their work. I have always worked 110% harder than my co-workers to try and overcome the “lazy” perception. I attended the *Your Weight Matters* National Convention Advocacy Training Day. I have decided the part I want is ADVOCATE.

My story was not possible without the support of many people in my life. Their heartfelt concern for my wellbeing showed how much they truly cared for me as a person, even after all these years, memories of those talks brought tears to my eyes. I share my story so that others who find themselves in similar situations can find the strength to stand against weight stigma and bias. I encourage others to share their story, family member’s story or friend’s story.



Sarah Bramblette’s *Your Weight Matters* Convention badge.

What part do you want to have?

Share your story; our voices are louder together.

Perhaps you can be a support person for someone in their journey to a healthier life.

– Sarah Bramblette



ABOUT THE OBESITY ACTION COALITION (OAC)

The Obesity Action Coalition (OAC) is a National non-profit organization dedicated to giving a voice to individuals affected by obesity and helping them along their journey toward better health. Our core focuses are to elevate the conversation of weight and its impact on health, improve access to obesity care, provide science-based education on obesity and its treatments, and fight to eliminate weight bias and discrimination.



VIBRANT COMMUNITY



NATIONAL AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS



ANNUAL CONVENTION



ADVOCACY



PUBLIC EDUCATION

LEARN, CONNECT, ENGAGE

The OAC knows that the journey with weight can be challenging but we also know that great things happen when we learn, connect and engage. That is why the OAC Community exists. Our Community is designed to provide quality education, ongoing support programs, an opportunity to connect, and a place to take action on important issues.

Through the OAC Community, you can get access to:

- Weight & Health Education • Community Blogs
 - Community Discussion Forum
 - Ongoing Support • Meaningful Connections
- AND MUCH MORE**



JOIN TODAY: GO TO OBESITYACTION.ORG/JOIN

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