

BY LIDIA NESCI

KUTZTOWN, March 1, 2013 – A disability awareness conference, “Living Together Is An Art” paired creativity along with an understanding for disabled people to bring what Sally Jo Snyder calls “positive social change”. This event was taking place in the McFarland Student Union Building, room 218 on Friday March 1, 2013 at 12:00 pm.

Sally Jo Snyder, Director of Advocacy and Consumer Engagement for the Consumer Health Coalition of Pittsburg, was not able to physically direct the presentation due to personal reasons; however, she did call in for the conference.

The opening statement on Snyder’s PowerPoint, “Through the power of image and narrative, creates opportunity for key conversations and dialogue” introduces photovoice. Snyder spoke about the idea of photovoice; a term referring to how one takes a picture describing a matter of importance to the individual.

In this case, a group of disabled persons were asked to walk around Pittsburgh and take pictures of how people with disabilities fit into society. Snyder said this was a tool to educate and advocate people with disabilities.

The first picture was a man in a wheelchair facing a Hollister store. This idea introduced a common challenge for those in wheelchairs such as not being able to walk up the steps into the store, along with the poster model of what society believes people should look like.

Snyder brought up the point of how many stores and restaurants still are not handicap accessible. She then challenged the audience to look around and really pay attention to what is accessible.

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This disability conference was meant to open peoples' eyes to the challenges disabled people face, when they look at the pictures these people take, according to the presentation. Snyder's PowerPoint presentation suggested, the camera being placed in the hands of the disabled gave them the opportunity to show others the way they see the world.

Snyder mentioned through this project, the people involved felt a sense of empowerment and were more able to make decisions that affected their lives. The overall idea behind this was meant to open eyes to disabilities.

There were 130 people in which attended the 2009 photo exhibit, says Snyder. This project has been around for quite some time and was also taking place at the state capital. It has created an impact on society and was also used as a means of attempting to change policies regarding the disabled, according to Snyder.

Another point made by Snyder was, "how has our nation, America, treated persons with disabilities?" She stopped talking about the pictures for a few minutes and spoke on behalf of the disabled. Crippled, handicapped, challenged, were all examples Snyder used to express how others view the disabled.

She brought discrimination to the discussion by introducing Franklin D. Roosevelt. She spoke about his fight with polio and how Roosevelt hid that for so long because he knew Americans would not give him the respect as president if they knew he was disabled.

Through the "Living Together Is An Art" discussion, Snyder hoped to achieve a better understanding for the disabled and wanted these people to feel as if they did not have to hide who they are, but to be proud.

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