

How Does the Disability Community Fit-In

By
Karen Lynn

For the last few day's I have been thinking, mulling over, and contemplating ideas about what I should write next for the issue of this magazine. Then I talked with one of my disabled colleagues and discussed the kind of active activity programs going on in our community. We deliberated, and truly came up with nothing.

Sad to say, but when I did an on-line search, in Torrance, California, nothing came up at all. All the daily activity programs and schedules, I found in the greater Los Angeles area, and South Bay, are designed specifically for people without disabilities. This idea is distressing because a large number of our population gets unnoticed and forgotten. It's as if we did not get recognized at all.

Hence, then, let me ask you; what kind of visible, direct, public notifications do you receive about group programs, daily activity plans, or special events going on in your community that are geared especially for the disabled? Do you get a written notice of sort informing and notifying you of new or on-going activities online or through your local newspapers? Could you tell me at the drop of a hat? Could you go online, find some kind of activity you wanted to do with a friend, and do it?

Sorrowfully, that often is not possible. Because we are not recognized and acknowledge the way the politicians and law makers say that we are. Activities are usually designed for sub-groups within the community, mainly and primarily for the mentally challenged, but nothing for the Cerebral Palsy person. We are a people, nation, all unto ourselves.

That is why it is so vitally important to speak up and out in the community you live in, so that your voice, wishes, and issues should be heard. Otherwise, they go hidden, ignored, and unnoticed. It also provides a forum for the development of our individual talents.

I ask you in all honesty, because twelve years ago I went to my local community center wanting to teach adaptive aerobics. I had not only the experience and qualifications, but talents in developing recreation programs and dance and could bring creative programs to the city. However, my offer was passed-over, and

patronized by not truthfully being considered. I was denied in the subtlest of ways.

The lack of these programs, or the awareness of these such programs; bring little solace, relief, or comfort from the community to help build and create, and tell us about quality programs that would benefit us all.

What a waste this is for both us, and the larger community. Having such visible programs would help build stronger lives. Having these visible programs would give us more to do. And, having such visibility would give us a greater stake in our community and being productive citizens.