

Hello Everyone! My name is Jill Vyn and I am the co-founder and co-director of a local non-profit organization called DisArt.

On the screen there are 3 words: Awareness, Understanding, and Belonging. I will be using these words, which act as a guide for DisArt, to help all of you better understand how, as a LaughFest volunteer, you can help all guests and fellow volunteers, Disabled and nondisabled, know that they are both welcomed and being accounted for.

Awareness: This black and white photo was taken in 1983. It a picture of a group of Disabled activists lined up at the front end of a march for Disability Civil Rights. Members of the group are carrying a white banner that has a quote by Martin Luther King, Jr printed on it. The quote says “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere”. There are different disabilities and cultures represented in this photo. Two well-known and life-long Disability Civil Rights activists are in the foreground of the picture: Judy Huemann and Justin Dart. The word awareness has been added to the bottom right hand corner.

For DisArt, awareness is the natural place to begin. As an organization we start by educating people about the existence and importance of the Disability culture. This photograph, which is likely to be unfamiliar to a majority of you, helps us become aware of a culture whose history and existence has not been broadly shared or understood. DisArt believes that disability is intrinsically connected to a person’s identity and, thus, dictates their life experience. This often parallels the experiences of racial, ethnic, gender, and sexual minorities in our community.

Understanding: On the screen is a photograph taken by local photographer Jeen Na who took photos of all the models leading up to DisArt's 2018 Fashion Show. Hope was one of the models for this show. In this photo she has her eyes closed. Her face is tilted toward the sky and she wears an expression of contentment as the wind blows her hair across her face. The background is blurred so that Hope becomes the center of our focus. Hope recalls feeling at peace in this moment and appreciating the way in which Jeen accounted for her at the time that this photo was taken and throughout their time together. The word understanding has been added to the bottom right hand corner.

Awareness comes more easily than understanding. Understanding is when we move from knowing that the Disability culture exists and being aware of the ways in which Disabled people are left out to actually doing something about it. Understanding happens when we begin to account for Disabled people in our community. Did you know that LaughFest ONLY uses venues that are physically accessible? What a statement. This wasn't always the case. They have clearly moved beyond the Awareness stage and into one of understanding. DisArt created a short podcast, which you will have access to, specifically for LaughFest volunteers to help the rest of us move from awareness to understanding as well.

Belonging: The image on the screen is a photograph taken by an ArtPrize staff member just prior to the start of DisArt's 2016 Fashion Show. There are 11 models close together in this photo, dressed and ready to go on the runway. Everyone is looking in different directions. Everyone is doing their own thing. It is not a posed photo and yet everyone looks like they belong. The word belonging has been added to the bottom right hand corner of the photo.

LaughFest wants their festival to be a place where all people, Disabled and nondisabled, know that they belong. Your job as a LaughFest volunteer is an important one. Your job is to support LaughFest's efforts to create a festival that enjoys the full and equitable participation of Disabled people. Your job is to make sure that Disabled people know that their participation is not only expected but necessary and wanted. This is not an easy job.

As a community we have work to do. DisArt was asked here tonight because LaughFest knows that your awareness of the Disability culture, your understanding that Disabled people have value, and your commitment to helping LaughFest account for everyone during the 10 days of the festival will get us all closer to creating a community where Disabled people no longer have to wonder, but rather, KNOW that they belong.

Thank you.

A community where we account for

Our collective responsibility is to create a community where everyone belongs, Disabled and nondisabled. Belonging is a community effort. ~~As a volunteer you are part of this~~

~~effort.~~ As a LaughFest volunteer you have the important play of ~~making sure that~~ Disabled people it's important that you know and believe that Disabled people have a role to play; that the success of this event depends on our ability to make sure that Disabled people understand ~~in the success of the event itself. What would it feel like if~~ Disabled people choose to participate in LaughFest because they believe that an understanding that their participation is expected, necessary, wanted and should be accounted for.

Shift perspective of belonging - not something you can give someone/not top down, **not out of pity**/something we work on together

Not a problem to be solved, burden - not a problem to be solved but a co-conspirator
People want to be respected, they don't want to have to justify or explain themselves to you -

Meet participant where their at
collaborators

Our sense of belonging isn't based on a false dichotomy in which disa and nondis always exist separately, but that we're trying to break down

reating a community that enjoys the full and equitable participation of all Disabled people.

We're not just talking about Disabled people feeling like they belong in a nondisabled world but that Call to Action: (Volunteer - ambassador for LaughFest and

An affront on my community/culture - based in belonging/cultural discomfort

Goals: Volunteer has an important part to play

Awareness, Understanding, Belonging and what your role is as a volunteer for an organization that obviously cares about...

1. Intro: (slide: logo, mission, image)
2. Awareness - Understanding - Belonging (slide)
3. Awareness (slide: just word taking up 1/3rd of screen, 2/3 images historical movements)
4. Understanding (slide: 1/3 awareness with image(?), 1/3 understanding and image(?))
5. Understanding: active, application of what you've learned, continued evaluation
6. Belonging: communal agreement that values the participation of Disabled people

1. Awareness: Disability is a cultural identity

- a. Elements of Disabled Culture Value and how

- i. **Interdependence/Community:** a personal and public need to be connected and supported (shared experiences and validation) - (LaughFest)
 - ii. **Managing Expectations (environment):** the practice of helping participants predict experiences. (LaughFest, volunteer)
 - iii. **Social Intelligence:** an ability to quickly assess situations in order to better navigate experiences (volunteer)

Tactics/Adaptability in Social Norms: a process through which environments and experiences are surveyed for potential challenges in hopes of creating on the spot solutions. (volunteer)

Resiliency: a mindset, an unwillingness to give up, creative workarounds

- iv. **Empathy/Caring (environment):** an environment where the needs of the participant are considered and accounted for (LaughFest/volunteer)
 - v. **Communication:** freedom of being able to communicate need without the fear of being considered a burden, social model (volunteer)

2. Understanding: Application

- a. Accounting vs. Accommodating - what's the difference and why does it matter
 - b. Understand that the Disabled participant has a role to play in their experience
 - c. Disabled people and their supports understand their needs better than anyone, important to give them a voice and to value their opinions
 - d. Meet the participant where they're at - not as a problem solver but as a collaborator (frees volunteer from needing to know the answers)
3. Belonging: Your participation is expected, that you're needed, necessary, and wanted (Volunteer - ambassador for LaughFest and
- a. Don't go overboard, part of the group
 - b. Customer vs. Participant
 - c. Gilda's Club connection: communal calling, what makes this event unique

LaughFest:

All venues are accessible

A lot of variety: they offer so much, their commitment to welcoming and accommodation is embedded in the work they do,

- Volunteer: a lot of variety, opportunity, choice, self-selection
- Customer: a lot of variety, opportunity,

Call out to events:

Ed Asner

Disability Advocates: community

Drums for All

LaughterRx

Laughter: Is It Really the Best Medicine? (Dylan Gadino) - laughter connected to health

Connections:

Creativity

Humor - embrace the darkness of humor

Interdependence/Community: a personal and public need to be connected and supported

Mission:

Supplemental:

1. Awareness:
 - a. History of Disability Rights: [DisTopia Podcasts](#)
 - i. Judy Heumann: Episode 18
 - ii. Mike Irvin: Episode 1
 - b. Disability as a Cultural Identity
 - i. Neil Marcus, Artist and Performer: <https://www.neilmarcus.com/>
 - ii. Neil Marcus, "Disability is not a brave struggle or 'courage in the face of adversity.' Disability is an art. It's an ingenious way to live."
2. Understanding:
 - a. DisArt: [Who We Are](#)
 - b. [2016 Elevate Fashion Show Recap](#)
3. Belonging:
 - a. [2018 Process and Presence Fashion Show Recap](#)
 - b. DisTopia Podcast: [Episode 17: Chun-Shan \(Sandie\) Yi](#)