THREE NON-PROFITS WORK FOR INCLUSION

Door County Civility Project. PFLAG, and Just Door County are working alone and together to increase inclusion in our county. As many of you know Door County Civility Project teaches that Be Inclusive is one of the tools of civility. Fostering a culture of openness and inclusion is in the best interest of everyone. PFLAG envisions a world where diversity is celebrated and all people are respected, valued and affirmed inclusive of their sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression. Equality Starts with Me. Just Door County states the Everyone Belongs in Door County. They are tabulating incident reports of unwelcome experiences that people have had here.

Just this year these non-profits have collaborated in three different ways to increase inclusion. On April 30th a Bystander/Upstarter training was offered at the Kress Center. 30 participants spend a day learning that people do experience exclusion in our county and we bystand or let it happen and then ways that we can upstand or try to alter the situation that would to one of more inclusion. Finally we were put in a number of situations where we could practice what we learned. While it was all very insightful, the key learning was gaining an understanding of how the people of diversity see situations much differently.

The second project is WE WECOME ALL. Members of each organization are approaching businesses throughout the county to put the WE WECOME ALL sticker in their window. Along with explaining the project we provide some ways that they can be more inviting to anyone that would come into their business and help their staff to do also. Our belief is that this welcoming signal will clearly let anyone thinking of coming into that business know that they will be treated with dignity and respect. So far over 75 businesses are participating and 8 community sponsors.

Thirdly, they are focusing on ensuring that their organization is inclusion, but encouraging others to be also. A definition of Inclusion for them is “Creating an environment so that each individual who lives, works, or visits in Door County is a respected and valued member of the community”. Further they see inclusion is a conscious choice; a progress, not just a program; acknowledges, respects, and values differences; promotes equality and fairness; and invites communication, collaboration and community.

They off the following steps for practicing intentional inclusion to help other organizations join with these three non-profits:

1. Evaluate your organization’s strengths and weakness in inclusion
2. Identify specific inclusion goals and timetable for implementation.
3. Designate an inclusion point person.
4. Collaborate with others for ideas, programs and mentorship.

Personally I would like to thank all three non-profits for focusing on this topic of inclusion and their willingness to work with others to join them. I especially liked their acknowledgement that inclusion takes time and effort. It is important to recognize that each of us truly do live in our own little world. We need to get out of that world and work hard at understand others. Please contact either of these programs for more information.

Orlaine I. Gabert, Door County Civility Project