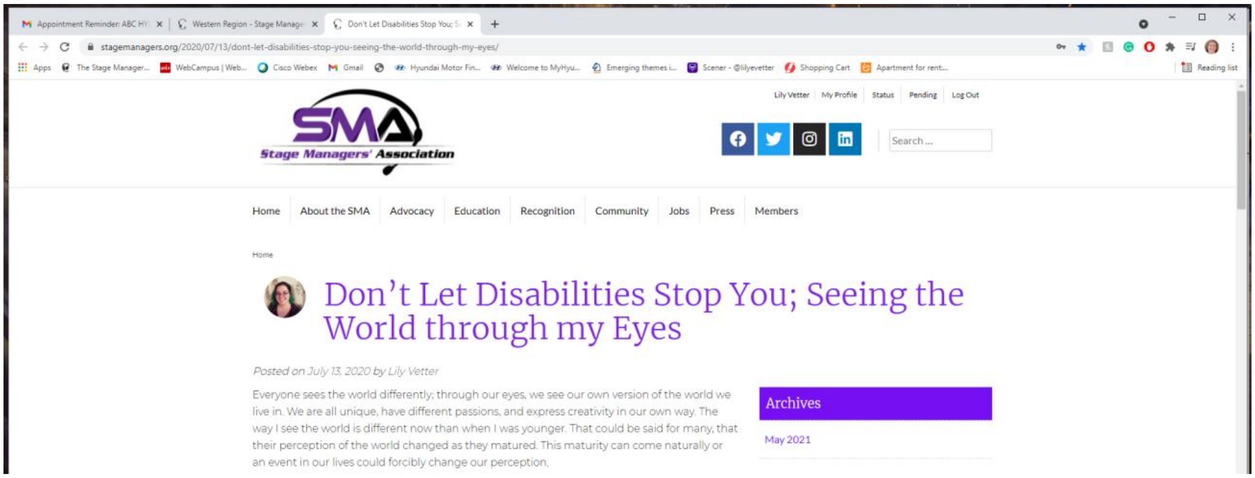

Don’t Let Disabilities Stop You; Seeing the World through my Eyes

Posted on July 13, 2020 by Lily Vetter

Everyone sees the world differently; through our eyes, we see our own version of the world we live in. We are all unique, have different passions, and express creativity in our own way. The way I see the world is different now than when I was younger. That could be said for many, that their perception of the world changed as they matured. This maturity can come naturally or an event in our lives could forcibly change our perception.

Archives

May 2021

Don’t Let Disabilities Stop You; Seeing the World through my Eyes

Everyone sees the world differently; through our eyes, we see our own version of the world we live in. We are all unique, have different passions, and express creativity in our own way. The way I see the world is different now than when I was younger. That could be said for many, that their perception of the world changed as they matured. This maturity can come naturally or an event in our lives could forcibly change our perception.

When I was young, I truly did not understand how lucky I was. The gift we have, to live on this earth is something that we should cherish while we can. Like most teenagers, I thought that I could escape death, that I would never die. At the age of fifteen, I could be characterized as a normal teenager, I struggled with bullies, my self-confidence, and acne. My acne had gotten so bad that my parents took me to a dermatologist for possible treatments. There was a consensus reached and an acne medication prescribed. I started taking the medication and it was starting work. I was given a book that outlined the treatment and all the possibly dangerous and life-threatening side effects. I skimmed the book and never really focused on the side effects that were possible. I was so confident as were my parents that nothing life-threatening could happen to me from this medication. For seven months that was true, everything was going smooth. My acne had all but cleared up and it was not coming back. It only took one tiny moment to trigger the butterfly effect that would change my life forever.

Around the end of month seven, there was a family reunion in Missouri. It was going to be an exciting event, family members I had never heard of would be there and many I knew would also be present. However, a day or so after arriving I started feeling very ill. My family and I brushed it off as a cold and we did not want to seek care till we were home. Our home was a hundred of miles away and I had to make it a couple of days till our flight. We all hoped it was simply a cold or an intense stomach bug. It was not a stomach bug. After three trips to Urgent Care and two trips to the Emergency room I was told they did not know what could possibly be wrong. Over the course of the month, I started losing my vision. I needed a neurologist; however, my town is so small that I had to be transferred to the nearest hospital with the necessary staff. By the time I was situated in the ICU I had lost about eighty percent of my vision. I was going blind and I was terrified. The next day I had lost almost all my vision, at the end of the day I finally, after months of suffering had a diagnosis. I had been diagnosed with Idiopathic Intracranial Hypertension (IIH), after starting treatment my vision started to slowly return. However, we caught it so late the nerves in my eyes were too damaged. I was then additionally diagnosed with Optic Atrophy. Both conditions have no known cure; I would have to learn to live with my two disabilities. In the end, I was lucky to be alive, I was so weak that one misstep during treatment could have killed me.

It took me a year to really get a grasp of what had happened. I was starting my junior year in High School and I had no idea what I wanted to do in life. I had been trying out different subjects to see what interested me. Theatre Technology caught my eye and I took the class. I had no idea that I just found my passion. When I started my undergraduate education at Northern Arizona University, I majored in Theatre Technology and Design. Throughout my four years, I tried almost every position that I could. I fell in love with Stage Management. I ran into obstacles along the way, managing my vision and my chronic illness was a challenge but I was determined not to be defined by disabilities. I had developed techniques and color coding systems to help aid my everyday tasks. When I graduated in May of 2019 with a Bachelor of Arts in Theatre, I was proud of my accomplishments and proud that I could continue to overcome. As I walked to my diploma, I was excited for my next step in life. I had been accepted to the University of Nevada Las Vegas; I would be pursuing an M.F.A. in Stage Management. There had only been one spot open in the program, I honestly did not expect to get it. I also didn't fully grasp that it was a fully-funded program, I would only have to pay around a couple of hundred dollars a semester. Everything I worked for built up to this accomplishment.

The years I have spent learning theatre and creating shows I been exposed to the most welcoming and diverse environment. There are quite a few plays and musicals representing disabled characters, which have been groundbreaking. While I don't "look disabled" I do not want to be defined by disabilities over my capabilities. Theatre has been such a rock for my soul. I thrive in our creative environment, and while I struggle sometimes, I will always overcome it. No matter what, even with the likelihood that I could eventually be legally blind, I see it as another obstacle. I will never stop wanting to create, inspire, and challenge the boundaries. I know no matter what that Theatre will always accept me no matter if I am one day blind or not. Everyone has a place in Theatre, in any position.

As a Stage Manager, I have over time developed techniques to overcome obstacles that my disability makes apparent. I color code every character their own color, I use tinted projector sheets against white paper, my computer is tinted, my cellphone is amber-tinted, and I wear sunglasses to prevent migraine.

Through my eyes, the world is a little blurred. I see a world that is full of creativity and passion. I try to find good in everyone and I can even be too nice at times. I explore new ideas and try to build new skills. I enjoy meeting new people, I want to know what they see through their eyes, their story. Everyone sees the world differently through their own eyes and we should try to, even for a moment see the world through someone else's eyes. I hope you can see the world through my eyes, if only for a moment.

No matter your challenges, your disabilities, or any obstacles in your way – Never Give Up. It is going to be hard at times, but nothing worth the effort is ever easy. Follow your passion and break barriers to get there if you must. Do not let your disabilities define you because you can be so much more. Don't be afraid to change the world and when you do, I would love to hear your story and see the world through your eyes.