



February 2, 2017

Syracuse University hosted “Redefining Inclusion” events in Los Angeles and San Francisco last month, featuring an engaging panel of educators, advocates and celebrities connected to the field of disability studies.

Syracuse University’s Lawrence B. Taishoff Center for Inclusive Higher Education brought their message of lifelong inclusion to San Francisco (January 25) and Los Angeles (January 26) to kick off a series of events called “Redefining Inclusion.” These premiere events, hosted in partnership with Syracuse University Los Angeles, brought self-advocates, families, SU alumni and educators together for a discussion on the challenges of and opportunities for inclusion for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in school, workplace and their communities.

The evenings started off with a short preview of the upcoming film *Intelligent Lives*, which challenges the social constructs of society’s definition of “intelligence.” Panel discussions addressing “Disability in the Media” and “Inclusive Education”, moderated by Taishoff Center Executive Director Beth Myers, followed, and featured content experts including:

- Dan Habib, Filmmaker, *Intelligent Lives* and *Including Samuel*
- Micah Fialka-Feldman '15, self-advocate and Outreach Coordinator for the Taishoff Center, featured in *Intelligent Lives*
- Brent Elder G'16, Professor of Inclusive Education at Rowan University
- Cheryl Theis, education advocate, Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund (SF event only)
- Kathleen Gee, professor of Special Education, California State University (SF event only)
- Amy Brenneman, actress, producer and activist (LA event only)
- Carrie Rosen, writer for ABC’s *Speechless* (LA event only)
- Andy Arias, disability advocate and actor (LA event only)

The discussions were engaging, eye-opening, and the panelists took the time to address specific concerns from audience members about their desires for full inclusion. Executive Director Beth Myers, explained that “Syracuse University has a long history of being at the forefront of the disability rights movement. We feel strongly that our students deserve to have a place at a university. Students with intellectual and developmental disabilities who have been the most excluded from higher education deserve to have the chance to make the same kinds of decisions for themselves that every other college student gets to make.”

The Taishoff Center plans to continue the Redefining Series to reach communities across the country. Videos of past events will be made available in the near future on taishoffcenter.syr.edu.

SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY
LAWRENCE B. TAISHOFF CENTER
FOR INCLUSIVE HIGHER EDUCATION

About: The Taishoff Center is dedicated to providing full and equitable participation of students with disabilities in higher education, especially students who have traditionally been excluded from post- secondary education. The center was established in 2009 by the Taishoff Family Foundation and has been operating InclusiveU at Syracuse University's School of Education since 2013. Since its inception, the Taishoff Center has made significant impact in supporting students with disabilities in higher education and within society at large. More information can be found at <http://taishoffcenter.syr.edu>.