DEEJ
Inclusion shouldn’t be a lottery
October 26, 2017
Swarthmore College- Lang Concert Hall

About the Panelists:

Brian Foti: Hi, my name is Brian Foti. I am twenty-four years old and I am a non-speaking Autistic. Growing up I always knew I was different but my family made me feel totally normal. It wasn’t until I saw my brother grow up that I realized my normal was different than his, and my life would never look the same as his. I have spent most of my life mourning the loss of my voice thinking I would never see it but I was wrong. Eighteen months ago I began a program that allows me to point to letters to spell and communicate my thoughts. It has been remarkable. I believe every autistic deserves a voice. I want to help them find their voice! I will use the power of my voice and the help of my communication partners to make this vision come to life. If you are wondering what you can do to help, it is pretty simple actually: Treat autistics with respect and dignity. Trust me, it makes a huge difference. Together, we can truly change the way people perceive autism and it can start today!

Nick Pentzell: Nick Pentzell is a graduate of Delaware County Community College in Media, Pennsylvania, where he earned his Associates Degree in Liberal Arts. A presenter at disability conferences and workshops, he has written about autism in The Philosophy of Autism (2013), Real People, Regular Lives (2011), Sharing Our Wisdom (2003), and in journals, including Wordgathering, Disability Studies Quarterly, AutCom’s The Communicator, and The Other Side. His award-winning video, Outside/Inside (2002), has been shown at disability film festivals worldwide.

DJ “Deej” Savarese: DJ Savarese graduated Phi Beta Kappa from Oberlin College in May 2017 with a double major in Anthropology and Creative Writing. An ASAN Scholar Fellow, he was also the recipient of Oberlin’s William Battrick Poetry Fellowship and their Comfort Starr Award for meritorious scholarly work in Anthropology. As a writer, he has published poems and prose in The Iowa Review, Seneca Review, Prospect, Disability Studies Quarterly, StoneCanoe, Wordgatherings.com and Voices for Diversity and Social Justice: Literary Education Anthology. A self-advocate and national social activist, he consults and presents at conferences across the country, working to make literacy-based education, communication, and inclusive lives a reality for all nonspeaking people.

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