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Fearless Friday: Marli Horwitz

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Fearless Friday: Marli Horwitz

Abstract

Over three and a half million people will have experienced homelessness in the past year- an overwhelming and disheartening statistic. For this week's Fearless Friday, we highlight **Marli Horwitz**, who has courageously dedicated herself to debunking stereotypes, increasing awareness, and taking action towards ending homelessness. As program coordinator of D.C. Outfitters, she has led many trips to public parks in D.C., provided toiletries and clothing to people experiencing homelessness, and has planned two successful Homelessness Awareness Weeks. [*excerpt*]

Keywords

Surge, Surge Gettysburg, Gettysburg College, Center for Public Service, homelessness, stereotypes, Homelessness Awareness Week, D.C. Outfitters

Disciplines

Civic and Community Engagement | Service Learning | Social Psychology and Interaction

Comments

Surge is a student blog at [Gettysburg College](#) where systemic issues of justice matter. Posts are originally published at [surgegettysburg.wordpress.com](#) Through stories and reflection, these blog entries relate personal experiences to larger issues of equity, demonstrating that -isms are structural problems, not actions defined by individual prejudice. We intend to popularize justice, helping each other to recognize our biases and unlearn the untruths.

SURGE

[VERB] : to move suddenly or powerfully forward or upward

FEARLESS FRIDAY: MARLI HORWITZ

December 5, 2014



Over three and a half million people will have experienced homelessness in the past year- an overwhelming and disheartening statistic. For this week's Fearless Friday, we highlight **Marli Horwitz**, who has courageously dedicated herself to debunking stereotypes, increasing awareness, and taking action towards ending homelessness. As program coordinator of D.C. Outfitters, she has led many trips to public parks in D.C., provided toiletries and clothing to people experiencing homelessness, and has planned two successful Homelessness Awareness Weeks.

Marli started her position as Program Coordinator with the Center for Public Service last fall. "The experience is incredibly rewarding because every trip is different. It is an unmatched experience to have as a college student," she said. About four to six times each semester, she drives a van of about twelve Gettysburg students into D.C.'s Franklin and McPherson Squares to provide toiletries, clothing, and friendly

conversation. The trips usually average about six hours total.

She said she has learned a lot during her time with D.C. Outfitters by interacting with many people and hearing so many different stories. She recalled meeting one homeless man who spoke of his time working for the United Nations. "What is truly gratifying is watching as students' stereotypes about homelessness are debunked right in front of my eyes," said Marli.

One challenge is the chance that they could have negative experiences along with the positive ones. "Sometimes people don't always want to talk to us, and there are people who don't want to be

approached, which can sometimes be discouraging to those on the trip,” she said. However she also mentioned that being there is still incredibly important. “The fact that we are spending time serving this population shouldn’t be undermined by a lack of communication.”

Homelessness Awareness Week, which began on November 10th, was successful in educating and bringing attention to homelessness in our society. Two of the major events were the Veterans Homelessness Panel, which was co-sponsored by the Eisenhower Institute, and the Cardboard Castle Sleep Out. The Sleep Out was particularly important because it allowed participants to experience the conditions which the homeless must bear on the everyday basis. “Often you don’t know what it’s like until you have experienced it firsthand,” said Marli.

She also pointed out the significance of listening to their journeys. “The voice of the stories of the homeless are especially important because they often go unheard. But their voices are the epitome of the disparities among individuals in this country.” Going forward she wants to bring it back locally and see what they can get involved with in Gettysburg, “as there are plenty of homeless people right in our backyard.” She hopes to also increase her Homelessness Awareness Week outreach numbers as much as possible.

The D.C. Outfitters trips will continue into next semester, so keep your eye out if you’re interested. Marli emphasizes that homelessness is not a disease. “These people are in an unfortunate circumstance, but there is a solution. It’s not an unfixable problem, but we do have to know where it begins systemically.” She hopes that when students return from the trips that they tell others about their experience, and maybe that will spark interest to do some research. “That’s definitely a starting point,” concluded Marli.