

Listening to the deaf

By Cate Hanus

THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE IS FULL OF terms people find offensive. The problem does not lie with the words themselves, but with the attitudes that hide behind them.

UPEI Student Services has a pamphlet outlining proper terms for persons with disabilities. Oddly enough, their list of "terminology to use" greatly resembles their list of "terminology not to use". For example, they list "the deaf" as being offensive while they state "person who is deaf" as being perfectly acceptable. The only difference is that the second option forces you to acknowledge the person behind the disability.

Words are nothing but a means to express an idea. Problems begin to arise when people become so caught up in the expression of the ideas that they forget it is the idea itself we have to fight. It does not really matter how you refer to someone with a disability, as long as you remember that there is more to them than that disability, there is a living, breathing being behind the label.

UPEI student James Foley stated that the only time he had ever been truly offended by someone's choice of words to describe his disability was when a music teacher referred to him as "that deaf kid." It was not so much the being called deaf that bothered him, but rather the inference that he was incapable. James now sings tenor in the Holy Redeemer Church Choir, and is doing quite well, disability and all.

Other problems arise with the inferred meanings of words. The term deaf is defined by Webster as "unable to hear." There is nothing in this definition that implies stupidity on the part of the subject. Unfortunately for years the term 'deaf' was often used in conjunction with

the term 'dumb' (meaning 'mute' or unable to speak'), which has come to mean stupid. Though these two words are rarely used together in modern language a heavy association between the two is maintained, and as a result there is a tendency to view deaf people as being stupid.

No matter what word is used, someone will find something wrong with it, or some reason why it should not be used. If all of these objections were to be heeded, there would be no English language. The term 'disability' implies the person is incapable. The phrase 'hard of hearing' implies a loss of hearing due to aging. The term crippled has developed a derogatory implication. Each individual has their own personal preference. There is no definite term that will offend no one. All that can be done is respect the wishes of individuals, and when speaking in a general sense, use the term you yourself feel the most comfortable with. There is no other viable option.

Terminology aside, having a disability is not necessarily a bad thing. Take hearing impairments as an example. The ability to read lips comes in quite handy. How many hearing people can do that? It puts the disabled person at quite an advantage when at a loud concert. They can tell with absolute ease everything that is said to them, while the hearing person has to struggle to catch any of the conversation. There is also the problem of the partner who keeps you awake all night with their snoring; this isn't a problem when you can not hear it. There are many perks to being "abnormal" Why does everybody always have to look at the down side?

Special thanks to James Foley and Lisa Foley.



Wednesday:

"GREAT BIG SEA"

Check out the "Bus Stop" outside the Barn...

Burgers, Donairs, Fajita's, Fries, etc.

Panther Lounge is open weekdays 9-4.

The bar is closed but there are pool tables and TV

WEDNESDAY
Oct 26

"Great Big Sea"
Fun In The Sun Contest...
win a trip to Florida

THURSDAY
Oct 27

Krazy Hour 6-9pm

FRIDAY
Oct 28

6pm Labatt Pool Tournament
Win a bar tab!
Pool tables stay open after tournament.

FRIDAY
MOVIES
Oct 28

MOVIE PUB
FREE POPCORN!

SATURDAY
Oct 29

CFS Student Saver Card
Night

MONDAY
Oct 31

9pm Saturday Night Live Reruns

TUESDAY
Nov 1

Labatt trivia with Jen Daley
Check out the specials!