



# Diverse Issues

Volume 3, No. 1

January - March 2002

## *Diversity in People: Invisible Disabilities - More Than The Eye Can See*

People with disabilities often complain that others assume they can't do things they are perfectly capable of. For example, upon seeing a person with cerebral palsy, some may assume the person is mentally retarded. And many may assume that a person who uses a wheelchair could not possibly drive a car. A major fight for people with disabilities seems to be proving that they can do things against a general assumption that they cannot.

But just as damaging as assuming people can't do things, is assuming that they *can*. What were your thoughts as you watched someone park in a handicapped accessible parking space and then walk away from the car? Or, what about the perfectly healthy-looking person who is riding around the store on a motorized scooter? Many of us would be tempted to conclude that these people are just lazy. Too frequently, we do not stop to think that an invisible disability might be involved. Although some disabilities, such as inability to walk, severely impaired vision, and missing limbs are easy to notice, many disabilities are not so apparent.

There are many disabilities that are virtually impossible for the casual observer to detect. The following is only a partial list of examples: arthritis, back injury, chronic fatigue syndrome, cystic fibrosis, heart condition, fibromyalgia, multiple sclerosis, osteoporosis, low vision, poor hearing, sleep apnea, and a host of mentally-related disabilities. Only a few will be discussed here.

Although they may look just fine, people with chronic fatigue syndrome and *fibromyalgia* may be suffering in silence. Fibromyalgia is now known to be one of the most common causes of chronic musculoskeletal pain. Some sources estimate that between three and 26 million Americans suffer from this condition (Barrett, 2000). Although a relatively new designated medical condition, a growing number of physicians recognize and treat fibromyalgia, and in 1999, the U.S. Social Security Administration included it in its list of disabling conditions.

The underlying cause of this condition is not well known, nor is there an accepted therapeutic regimen to "cure" it. The person with fibromyalgia may have low levels of energy and hurt from head to toe, day after day. People with chronic fatigue syndrome and fibromyalgia must calculate how they want to allocate their energy

### In This Issue

- ◆ **Diversity in People:** *Invisible Disabilities - More Than The Eye Can See*
- ◆ **Diversity Resource:** *Diversity Education Audio/Visual Lending Library*
- ◆ **Diversity in the Workplace:** *The Ups and Downs of the Workplace*
- ◆ **Diversity Activity:** *Power and Status*
- ◆ **Diversity Around the State:** *"Wild World Camp!"*

*(Continued on next page)*

*(Continued from front page)*

and pain. On a given day, pushing the cart around the grocery store may take more energy than is available to spend. Without the ability to park close to the door, running an errand may become an insurmountable task.

**Sleep apnea** is another hidden disability. As many as 18 million Americans suffer from sleep apnea (Hatfield, 2001), a breathing disorder that is characterized by interruptions to breathing during sleep. The most common form of sleep apnea occurs when air cannot flow into or out of the person's nose or mouth, although efforts to breathe continue.

Breathing may be interrupted for a few seconds to a minute or more. This may be due to a weakness in the throat muscles around the airway, buildup of fat that narrows the airway, and excessive relaxing of the tongue which blocks the airway. The resulting reduction in oxygen

and increase in carbon dioxide in the blood signals the brain to tighten the muscles and open the airway for resumed breathing. Each time this happens, the person is aroused. This pattern may occur as often as 20 to 60 times an hour, preventing the person from getting an adequate amount of deep restorative sleep (Waking up, 2001).

The result is that the person with sleep apnea has a reduced level of concentration during the day and may fall asleep at inappropriate times. This could happen while in the middle of a sentence or while driving a vehicle. Treatments range from changes in diet, wearing pressure masks at night, and use of dental appliances, to surgery. So the next time someone is doing needlepoint during your workshop, it may not be that they are disinterested or rude. In fact, it may be just the opposite; they want to avoid falling asleep so they can hear your words of wisdom.



**Multiple chemical sensitivity** is a heightened sensitivity to a variety of commonly used chemical agents at levels generally tolerated by the majority of the population. People affected may react adversely to perfumes, cologne, after-shave, scented hair products, dry cleaned clothing, air freshener products, pollen, mold, dust, and construction-related chemicals. These substances can trigger reactions that range from mild to serious disability. Difficulty breathing, skin rashes, swelling of the nose, swelling around the eyes, and migraine headaches that may last for several days are some reactions that can result from exposure to these scents.

Although the type of products one chooses to wear is a private matter, it could be toxic to someone with multiple chemical sensitivity. Asking those who must be in close contact to refrain from using certain products may seem like an infringement of that person's freedom. For the person who suffers from multiple chemical sensitivity, however, it could mean freedom from a toxic environ-

ment.

People with invisible disabilities are caught between not being fully accepted as people without disabilities, yet not being recognized as having "real disabilities" either. Within the disability community, people vary and have different levels of ability. While some people with disabilities can do most things that people without disabilities can do, they may not be able to do them as long or as well or in the same way.

The assumption that a person without a white and red cane is able to stand in line at the bank or a grocery store checkout may be damaging to the person with an invisible disability. Some people can indeed walk without the use of a wheelchair, but chose to use one to conserve their limited energy.

*(Continued on Page 3)*

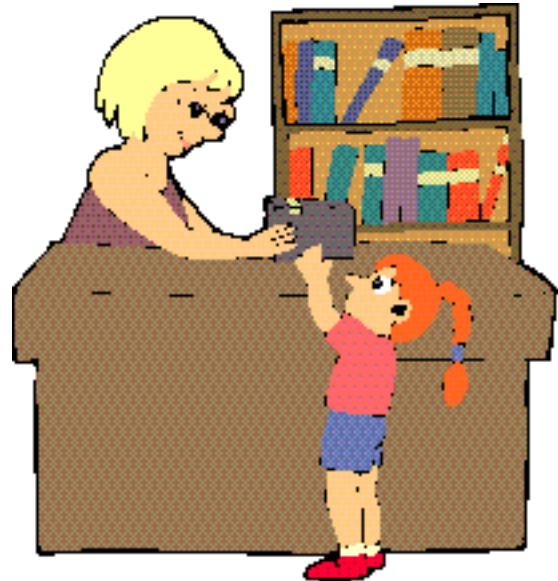
So, if you see somebody doing or acting a certain way and your first response is to think they are lazy or faking, they just may be. Then again, consider the fact that they may be doing their best, trying with all they have. Be careful with your assumptions and slow to criticize. You might even offer your help. Most people with invisible disabilities would be happy to trade their handicapped parking placard or license for more endurance or less pain.



#### References:

- Barrett, D. A. (2000). *Fibromyalgia: an "invisible" disability*. Available at <http://quackwatch.com/03HealthPromotion/fibromyalgia/fms03.html>.
- Hatfield, L. D. (2001). *Wake-up call/In a stressed-out society, sleep apnea disorder can be a living nightmare*. *San Francisco Chronicle [Final edition]* Dec. 16. (p. E9). San Francisco, CA.
- Montgomery, C. (2001). *A hard look at invisible disability*. *Ragged Edge Online. Issue 2*. Available at <http://www.ragged-edge-mag.com/0301/0301ft1.htm>.
- Oberlin, B. (2000) *Column 2 - What's special about invisible disabilities?* ID Agora. [http://tertius.net.au/id/column/2\\_whats\\_special\\_about\\_ID.html](http://tertius.net.au/id/column/2_whats_special_about_ID.html).
- Oberlin, B. (2000) *Column 16 - Invisible disability stigma*. ID Agora. [http://tertius.net.au/id/column/16\\_ID\\_stigma.html](http://tertius.net.au/id/column/16_ID_stigma.html).
- Robertson, B. (2001). *Multiple chemical sensitivity resources*. Available at [http://members.tripod.com/~Barbara\\_Robertson/MCS.html](http://members.tripod.com/~Barbara_Robertson/MCS.html).
- Struik, M. (1997, June 23). *Hidden Disabilities: We are not lazy!* <http://www.suite101.com/article.cfm/378/2123>
- Waking up to the risks of sleep apnea*. (Nov/Dec 2001). *The Professional Medical Assistant*. American Association of Medical Assistants, Chicago, Ill. (no author).

## *Diversity Resource: Diversity Education Audio/Visual Lending Library*



A collection of diversity-focused video and audio tapes are being made available for loan to Pennsylvania Cooperative Extension educators for use in educational programming. This opportunity is being provided on a pilot basis.

Coming soon, you can visit the Web site at <http://AgExtEd.cas.psu.edu/pi/pimenu.html> and click on the Resource button for a listing of available materials. The title, description, length, and appropriate audiences are provided for each video or audio tape.

Materials may be borrowed for a maximum 2-week period of time. To borrow an item, complete and submit the **Diversity Education Lending Library Request Form** located on the Web site. Materials are available for loan only to Pennsylvania Cooperative Extension educators.

***"The greatest compliment that was ever paid to me was when one asked me what I thought, and attended to my answer."***  
Henry David Thoreau

## *Diversity in the Workplace: The Ups and Downs of the Workplace*

*All service ranks the same with God;  
With God, whose puppets, best and worst,  
Are we: there is no last nor first.*

-Robert Browning, from *Pippa Passes*



Within almost every organization there is a hierarchy among the employees that is based on position, title, role, and function. In some organizations, distinctions are made between exempt and non-

exempt employees, union and nonunion employees, those who work with their hands and those who work in an office setting. In university settings, the distinction may be between faculty, administrative, and staff positions. In Cooperative Extension, the hierarchy may relate to county agent, program assistant, and nutrition education advisor positions. Even in organizations that claim to have a “flat organizational chart,” there are still three categories of employees - the “tops,” the “middles,” and the “bottoms” (Esty, Griffin & Hirsch, 1995).

In some sense, hierarchical distinctions create a class system in the workplace. Unlike other issues such as race, sex, age or sexual orientation, class in the workplace is largely unacknowledged; issues of class are largely under the table.

Robert Fuller in *Breaking Ranks* (2001) suggests that rank divides us into “somebodies” and “nobodies.” More than most care to admit, we treat others, and are treated by others, based on our relative rank. The truth is that each of us has felt like a somebody some times, and a nobody at others. A key to feeling like a somebody is being recognized by others. Without recognition from others, we may feel discounted, disconnected, marginal, or even invisible.

The greater the recognition we receive from others via personal or professional achievement, the higher we rise on the status ladder. We measure ourselves and are measured by the rungs above and below us. There is truth in the popular song lyric, “You’re nobody till somebody loves you” (Fuller, p. 11).

Our position in the hierarchy signifies our level of power, who we have authority over, and who we are expected to submit to. If you think about it, one of the first questions people ask when they first meet you, both in and out of the workplace, is “What do you do?” Regardless as to the answer, everyone from top to bottom has a strong desire for dignity and a feeling of connection.

Rank is generally earned and represents levels of excellence. The problem is not that rank counts. As Fuller (2001) states:

*When it signifies excellence, rank should count and it does. The trouble is that rank counts twice. No sooner is rank assigned than the holder of higher rank can use the power inherent in that rank to aggrandize themselves at the expense of those of lower ranks. Although some exercise their rank properly - within their area of competence and in a way that respects the dignity of those under their authority - others do not (p. 19).*

Rank is an important and necessary tool in the management of organizations. Within the area where it has been earned, rank deserves and commands our respect. However, rank-based mistreatment in the workplace can result in disrespect, inequity, discrimination, ridicule, and exploitation of those at lower ranks. Too often, classism in the workplace, or “rankism,” goes unchallenged.

*(Continued on Page 5)*

Left unchallenged, resentment builds among those in the lower ranks. Most of us are pretty good at detecting condescension or indignity in the way others' treat us. No matter what our station, we have all felt it, and it does not feel good. Some recipients of rank-based mistreatment may look for ways to sabotage the organization; others may take their frustrations out on family and friends. For many, however, who simply work in quiet desperation, their frustrations are translated into lower levels of job satisfaction and performance, and lower levels of loyalty and commitment to the organization.

Additionally, large class-like distinctions in the workplace limit communication. Oftentimes, those in lower ranks possess information that would be helpful to those at higher ranks. Respect and open communication across levels may contribute to the accomplishment of important organizational goals.

Everyone deserves to work in a climate of dignity and respect. One way to make that happen is to protect the dignity of others as you would your own.

#### Suggestions:

- ❖ Recognize the work that each employee contributes.
- ❖ Include lower-level employees in major organizational social events.
- ❖ Avoid unnecessary distinctions that may make certain groups feel like second-class citizens.
- ❖ Provide opportunities for employees at lower ranks to offer suggestions about how to do the work better. Listen to their responses.
- ❖ Include several levels of employees on committees and task forces, where appropriate.

#### References:

*Esty, K.; Griffin, R.; & Hirsch, M. S. (1995). Workplace Diversity: A Manager's Guide to Solving Problems and Turning Diversity into a Competitive Advantage. Holbrook, M. A.: Adams Media Corporation.*

*Fuller, R. W. (2001) Breaking Ranks: In Pursuit of Dignity and Respect. Available at: <http://www.breakingranks.net/book/book.html>.*

### **March is Women's History Month— Test Your Knowledge of Women Who Have Made Important Contributions, Past and Present**

Match the names with the descriptions

1. Marie Curie
  2. Indira Gandhi
  3. Nancy Lopez
  4. Wilma Rudolph
  5. Georgia O'Keefe
  6. Kristi Yamaguchi
  7. Sandra Day O'Connor
  8. Wilma Mankiller
  9. Rosa Parks
  10. Toni Morrison
- a. Author and winner of the 1993 Nobel Prize in Literature, the National Book Award for Fiction, and the Pulitzer Prize for fiction.
  - b. First woman Supreme Court Justice in 1981.
  - c. Although she could not walk until she was 8 years old, she won three gold metals in the 1960 Olympics for track events.
  - d. Raised in Poland and educated in France, she married and had two children before she won the Nobel Peace Prize with her husband for work in science.
  - e. Helped to start the Civil Rights Movement when she would not give up her seat to a European American man on a Montgomery bus in 1955.
  - f. In 1995, she was the first woman appointed chief of the Cherokee Nation, one of the largest native tribes in the United States.
  - g. Artist who stamped her mark on 19<sup>th</sup> century art and culture. She created simple paintings with broad areas of smooth, delicate colors. She lived between 1888 and 1986.
  - h. Assassinated in 1984, she was the first woman Prime Minister of India.
  - i. U.S. Champion, World Champion and 1992 Winter Olympics Champion in figure skating. (Answers on page 7)

## *Diversity Activity: Power and Status*

This activity is appropriate for older youth and adults.

**Goal:** Each participant will experience the variety of ways power and status affects attitudes and behaviors between different individuals and groups of people.

**Time:** 30 - 45 minutes

**Materials:** One (or two) decks of shuffled cards from which all face cards and aces have been removed.

**Procedure:** Participants should be sitting in a circle. Tell the group that you are going to fan the cards out face down and let each participant choose one. Emphasize that it is important that everyone keep his or her card **face down** and not look at it. If anyone sees their card, they should tell the facilitator, return it to the deck, and take another one.



Then go around the room and let everyone choose a card, keeping it face down until the facilitator has given further instructions.

When everyone has a card, ask participants to listen to the instructions before moving. Let them know that you will ask them to stand up, hold their card up to their forehead, face-out, and mill around the room as if they were in a social situation (or office party). Everyone must promise not to tell anyone what their card is and no one should look in anyone else's eye glasses to see what their own card is. Ask for agreement from participants to these rules.

Before giving the signal for everyone to stand and put their card on their forehead, face-out, and mingle, inform them that **first they need to know that 8's, 9's, and 10's have what it takes to get them what they want. Repeat this line.** Give the signal to start.

Allow participants to mingle and interact for about 10 minutes, longer than you might be inclined to let this process go on. It is important to give adequate time for the group to get over feeling silly and foolish and let the group dynamics occur. Step back and observe the interaction. You may wish to ask one or two others to observe the process with you as usually there is too much going on to see everything. (**Note:** Even if you think nothing much is going on, resist the temptation to cut the activity short. Usually something is going on, it simply may not be immediately apparent.)

After ten minutes, ask the participants to end their mingling but **not** look at their card until you give the OK.

Ask participants to line up in order from "2's" to "10's" without looking at their cards (based on what they think their number is, which in turn is based on how people reacted to them). One by one ask each participant to say what number they think is on their card and then look at their card.

After everyone has completed this step, invite everyone to return to their seats and ask the following processing questions. Allow for discussion:

1. What happened? (Take as many answers as you can.)
2. How did you feel during this activity?
3. What does this have to do with multicultural education or intergroup relations at school or in the workplace?
4. How do instances of differential power and status affect intergroup relations?
5. What did you learn about yourself in this activity?

**Note:** The processing of this activity can be fairly "light" or can be very emotional and take a longer time. But remember the processing and discussion is an important part of this activity.

Source: O'Malley, M. R. and Davis, T. *Dealing with Differences*. The Center for Peace Education, 118-C East Main Street, Carrboro, NC 27516.

## *Diversity Around the State: “Wild World Camp!”*

*Contributed by Suzanne Boarts, CED, Armstrong County*

During the summer camp season, Armstrong County 4-H teamed up with the YMCA to conduct a day camp entitled “Wild World Camp!” For five days, the YMCA and Cooperative Extension staff worked together to offer educational lessons, crafts, music, and recreation activities. Focus was placed on five countries: the United States, Africa, Mexico, Poland, and Germany. The cultures of each country were discussed and information about holiday customs, music, and foods were shared.



Activities varied for each country. For the United States, youth used popsicle sticks to make our country’s flag. They also decorated folders with 4<sup>th</sup> of July rubber stamps. For Africa, youth fashioned masks, painted their hair, learned about the various tribes in Africa, and studied African housing. For Mexico, youth made musical instruments common to Mexico while enjoying salsa and chips. A local Polish resident helped youth learn about traditional and holiday customs of Poland, as well as, the religious practices of the Polish people. Painting eggs with special Polish designs was fun. And finally, youth watched a film that described the geography of Germany, and then made an angel ornament and doily picture frames. Each child’s picture was put into a frame.



The picture is of Ingrid Boarts modeling traditional Polish dress.

The camp was very successful. More than 24 youth, plus 4-H teen leaders, participated. Parents really appreciated the educational information and the fun activities provided for their children. They mentioned that the other weeks were primarily fun...but this week was special because the children learned about other people. Plans are underway for a similar program next summer. One theme under consideration is the “American Indian.”

*Answers to Women’s History Month Quiz on Page 5:  
1d, 2h, 3j, 4c, 5g, 6i, 7b, 8f, 9e, 10a*

*Diverse Issues is authored by:*

*Patreese D. Ingram  
State Extension Specialist Diversity Education*

Handwritten signature of Patreese D. Ingram in blue ink.

*Department of Agricultural and Extension Education  
323 Agricultural Administration Building  
University Park, PA 16802  
E-mail: pdi1@psu.edu 814-863-7439*

## Diversity Calendar

### **February 2002 - Black History Month**

- 2<sup>nd</sup> - Ground Hog Day* - U. S. Marks a custom of forecasting the duration of winter based on whether or not the groundhog sees its shadow.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> - Setsubun* - Japan. Bean-Throwing Festival, a national holiday originated from Shinto beliefs.
- 12<sup>th</sup> - Lunar New Year*. Celebrated by many Asian countries and cultures during the first three days of the first lunar month.
- Shrove Tuesday* - Christians. A day that Christians confess their sins, signifying penitence with which to enter the season of Lent.
- Shul* - Korean. New Year's celebration. Marks the 1<sup>st</sup> day of spring.
- Tet* - Vietnamese. New Year calendar. It is the most important festival in Vietnamese culture.
- 13<sup>th</sup> - Ash Wednesday* - Christian. The first day of the Christian Lent in the West. Lent is a 40-day period of penitence and self-examination.
- Losar* - Tibet - Tibetan New Year.
- 14<sup>th</sup> - Race Relations Day* - U. S. Protestant holiday to encourage understanding among all races.
- Valentines Day* - Christian. Recognizes the Christian martyr named Valentine. Today is also dedicated to romantic love.
- 15<sup>th</sup> - Mahaparinirvana* - Hindu. Observance of the anniversary of Buddha's death or liberation.
- 17<sup>th</sup> - Vasanta Panchami* - Hindu, Sikh. Festival honors arrival of spring and Saraswati, the goddess of learning, wisdom, and fine arts.
- 18<sup>th</sup> - President's Day* - U. S. Celebrates the February birthdays of George Washington and Abraham Lincoln.
- 21<sup>st</sup> - Eid Al-Adha* - Islam. Festival of Sacrifice. Honors Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son to God.
- 25<sup>th</sup> - People Power Day* - Philippines. Marks overthrow of Filipino President Ferdinand Marcos in 1986.

### **March 2002 - National Women's History Month National Irish-American Heritage Month**

- 1<sup>st</sup> - Martisor* - Rumania, Bulgaria. Marks the end of winter and the arrival of spring.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> - Hinamaturi* - Japan. Doll Festival or Girl's Day.
- 11<sup>th</sup> - Farvardin* - Zoroastrian. Festival honoring spirits of the dead. Held 10 days before the new year in India and Iran.
- 13<sup>th</sup> - Maha Shivaratri* - Hindu. Shiva's Night, honors the Lord Shiva. Hindus traditionally fast the day before and worship at shrines.
- 14<sup>th</sup> - Muharran* - (sundown) Islam. Marks the first day of the first month of the Islamic year.

- 17<sup>th</sup> - St. Patrick's Day* - Ireland, U.S. Honors the patron saint of Ireland and people of Irish heritage.
- 18<sup>th</sup> - Great Lent* - Eastern Orthodox Christian.
- 20<sup>th</sup> - Naw-Ruz* - (sundown) Iran. New Year's celebration. Signifies end of the fasting period for Zoroastrians and people of the Baha'i faith.
- 21<sup>st</sup> - Boun Pimay* - Laos. New Year celebration.
- 23<sup>rd</sup> - Ashura* - (sundown) Islam. 10-day festival dedicated to the martyrdom of Hussein, the grandson of Muhammad.
- 24<sup>th</sup> - Palm Sunday* - Christian. Marks the beginning of the Christian Holy week.
- 27<sup>th</sup> - Passover* - (sundown) Jewish. Eight-day festival of the liberation of the Israelites in Egypt. Dietary restriction the whole week.
- 28<sup>th</sup> - Holi* - Hindu, Sikh. Festival of Color. Celebration of spring.
- 29<sup>th</sup> - Good Friday* - Christian. Ends the Lenten season and commemorates the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.
- 31<sup>st</sup> - Easter* - Christian. Celebration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ after his crucifixion.

### **April 2002**

- 1<sup>st</sup> - April Fool's Day* - Intrn'l. Day for practical jokes.
- 5<sup>th</sup> - Qing Ming Festival* - Taiwan, China. National holiday honoring the dead.
- 6<sup>th</sup> - Chakri Day* - Thailand. Honors Rama I.
- 8<sup>th</sup> - Buddha's Birthday* - Buddhist. Celebrates the founder of Buddhism, Siddhartha Gautama. Observed on the nearest Saturday to this date, as not to interfere with work.
- National Day of Silence* - Observed by those who support lesbian, gay, and transgender rights.
- Yom Ha-Shoah* - (sundown) Jewish. Holocaust Day. Commemorates Jews who died in concentration camps in WWII.
- 13<sup>th</sup> - Buddhist New Year* - Buddhism.
- Sonkran* - Thailand. Water Festival, Thailand's New Year celebration. Water is a Thai symbol for washing away bad luck.
- Varushapirapu* - Sri Lanka. New Year's celebration based on the Hindu calendar.
- 16<sup>th</sup> - Yom Hazikaron* - Israel. Memorial Day.
- 20<sup>th</sup> - Festival of Ridvan* - Baha'i. 12-day celebration of Baha'u'llah's stay in the Garden of Ridvan.
- 24<sup>th</sup> - Administrative Professionals' Day* - U.S. Secretary's Day.
- 25<sup>th</sup> - Take Our Daughters to Work Day* - U.S.
- 26<sup>th</sup> - Gathering of Nations Pow Wow* - U. S.
- National Arbor Day* - U.S.

This file may be accessed electronically at: <http://AgExtEd.cas.psu.edu/FCS/pi/Newsletters.html>

© The Pennsylvania State University 2002

**This publication is available in alternative media on request.**

The Pennsylvania State University is committed to the policy that all persons shall have equal access to programs, facilities, admission, and employment without regard to personal characteristics not related to ability, performance, or qualifications as determined by University policy or by state or federal authorities. It is the policy of the University to maintain an academic and work environment free of discrimination, including harassment. The Pennsylvania State University prohibits discrimination and harassment against any person because of age, ancestry, color, disability or handicap, national origin, race, religious creed, sex, sexual orientation, or veteran status. Discrimination or harassment against faculty, staff, or students will not be tolerated at The Pennsylvania State University. Direct all inquiries regarding the nondiscrimination policy to the Affirmative Action Director, The Pennsylvania State University, 201 Willard Building, University Park, PA 16802-2801, Tel 814-865-4700/V, 814-863-1150/TTY.