



Matt Soble

is a senior at Solon High School. Matt is very active in BBYO (B'nai B'rith Youth Organization). Matt has participated in martial arts for the last ten years. He will be attending Ohio University's School of Business in the fall and plans to start his own business after college.

The roots of discrimination are often based on color and gender. These divisions and judgments can be made at first glance and are easy to identify. An equally concerning source of discrimination is more transparent and harder to detect. Neuro-diversity lies in those people who are socially awkward and have diagnosed syndromes (e.g. ADHD, Aspergers) that affect the way they interact with people. In my generation, the number of people who are diverse in this way has drastically increased. Teens today must learn how to include and accept people who may seem different.

Jonathan (not his real name) was brilliant. He took only A.P. classes knowing electives would lower his GPA at Solon High School. After school he did homework all night. His social life was minimal. On the weekends our B'nai Brith Youth Organization (BBYO) chapter regularly held programs that he would attend, but he often didn't feel welcome. Kids made obnoxious comments behind his back and sometimes to his face. He was socially different and everyone could tell. Eventually Jonathan stopped going to programs and dropped out. I will never forget the day that I, along with my chapter youth group board, decided to change his life and invited him back. We decided to step up and take a stand for him. Whenever we heard people making fun of him we calmly asked them to stop and told them it wasn't right. The seven of us worked together to create a welcoming environment for Jonathan and it worked. He never thanked us. He never had to. His smile when we saw him was enough to tell us we truly made a difference.

We must utilize the brotherhood felt in AZA to fight against peer aggression and discrimination. Just in Ohio, I have begun to fight against these issues. At the leadership training institute that I planned, I taught effective ways to stop subtle aggression towards others by telling them the story of Jonathan, explaining to them the power a small group of confident teens can have when they decide to take a stand for acceptance. My hope is that when everyone begins to be more accepting in their chapters they will carry their skills regarding peer aggression to school and help create a warmer atmosphere for socially challenged kids. On a national level, I plan to meet with the international president of BBYO. With his support, I will form a movement through BBYO to end transparent discrimination. Chapter and regional leaders will learn effective ways to create a safe place for all individuals across the country.

The butterfly effect is a theory that states that tiny actions in a complex environment can lead to radical changes. According to this theory a butterfly flapping its wings could lead to storms across the country. I hope to trigger the butterfly effect among teens nation wide. One person will affect thousands in their lifetime. If each BBYO teen learns to live their life with an open mind and heart, the results will be dramatic.