



Lessons in Teen Photography: An Interview with Annie Levy



Teen photography class with Annie Levy on their way to Mora Glass Art in Brooklyn

older people including a permanent installation at Roosevelt Hospital here in NYC, a lobby installation for the Alzheimer's Association, among others. On a larger scale my work about older people culminated in a show at the United Nations. That show was called "Ageless" as it was about older people. I have always been interested in not only the seen meaning but also the unseen meaning of the life inside the person.

When my work was commissioned by The Frick Collection for their "Art of Observation" program for physicians I became very interested in doing projects about the intersection of peoples' lives and the world of medicine. Through the Fred J. Epstein Pediatric Care Foundation, we connected with Montefiore Children's Hospital and became involved with a group of teens and young adults who were part of a group there who were dealing with life threatening illnesses. We spent time with them and did a photography workshop, resulting in a show and the project being titled "Not Defined By Diagnosis" by the participants. I was awarded the New York Post Liberty Medal for Leadership for this project. I am grateful for this and have always felt that it also acknowledged the community's leadership in telling their own story.

CBTF: You are working through a grant with the Fred J. Epstein Pediatric Care Foundation. Can you tell me a little bit about that and why Kathy Epstein was interested in our program?

Annie: Kathy said that Fred had always been interested in the mission and work of CBTF. He was one of their honorees and the organization is going to start giving a Humanitarian Award in his name. Fred always loved photography, was an amateur photographer and thought that photos were a wonderful way to communicate and share thoughts and emotions. It was then so natural to think of combining Fred's love of photography, children and the mission of his Foundation into a program for CBTF.

CBTF: What drew you to work specifically with CBTF?

Annie: Kathy Epstein was obviously aware of CBTF and we were looking for another site that we could bring a photography workshop to. It had been so popular at Montefiore and seemed to be something that others could enjoy and benefit from. Frankly, when we had our first meeting about this my heart skipped a beat because I could feel the care, concern and personal attention for folks on the part of the staff as we spoke. My instinct on that was certainly correct - I have not been disappointed.

CBTF: We're proud of our brain tumor survivors because of their unique perspective of the world and how they can overcome challenges. What things have you observed (either through photography or their personalities in general) that surprises or inspires you?

Annie: What inspires me about people in general, is when, no matter what the situation, they choose life. Clearly that is the wise and fruitful choice but it is not always the easiest choice so when I see people do that - and I see that in the workshop participants and in their images each and every week - I am inspired.

For a little more about Annie Levy, visit www.annielevy.com