

Former fashion photographer celebrates beauty in human diversity

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Award-winning fashion photographer Rick Guidotti crisscrossed the globe taking photos for renowned clients such as Yves Saint Laurent, Revlon and GQ. Now, he uses his eye for beauty to capture images of children and adults with genetic, physical, cognitive and behavioral differences.

Guidotti will share photos he has taken of children with conditions ranging from autism to Fragile X syndrome during a keynote address at the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) National Conference & Exhibition. He also will talk about his work to give a voice to the faces in the photos and educate others during his presentation from 11:30-noon on Saturday, Oct. 11 in Ballroom 20 of the San Diego Convention Center.

CEO of a nonprofit group called Positive Exposure, Guidotti is on a mission to change public perceptions of those with [differences](#) so they are seen as people first rather than as a disease or victim.

He made the leap from fashion photographer to founder of Positive Exposure in 1998 after a chance encounter with a girl who had albinism. He was mesmerized by her white hair and pale skin. Yet when he did some research on the condition, he was disturbed by the images in medical textbooks of children standing up against a wall with a black bar across their eyes.

He left the fashion industry and created Positive Exposure to show the

beauty in human diversity and human genetics and promote a more inclusive, compassionate world where differences are celebrated. Initial images were published in the June 1998 issue of LIFE magazine as a cover story titled "Redefining Beauty."

"We need to start talking about diversity constantly," Guidotti said. "That's the only way we're going to break down those fears and stigma and address discrimination and prejudice in the workforce, in the community, in our churches, in our synagogues, wherever we happen to be."

Guidotti's photographic exhibition, called Positive Exposure: The Spirit of Difference, premiered at the People's Genome Celebration in June 2001. It also has been in the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History in Washington, D.C., and galleries around the world.

All of the photos are mounted on reflective glass and include information about the person pictured.

"The first thing you see is your own reflection," Guidotti said. "It's not just about looking at people living with differences. It's about accepting and seeing your own differences and instantly making that connection or that bond with that individual and realizing that we're not that far apart."

Provided by American Academy of Pediatrics

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