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Former Fashion Photographer Aims to Create 'New Standard of Beauty' Beyond Physical Differences

By [STEPHANIE LECCI](#) (/PEOPLE/STEPHANIE-LECCI) & [ELEANOR PETERSON](#) (/PEOPLE/ELEANOR-PETERSON)



http://mediad.publicbroadcasting.net/p/wuw/files/styles/placed_wide/public/201404/Guidotti_Albinism_2012.JPG

Photographer Rick Guidotti hopes his Positive Exposure organization will show the beauty in us all, 1 of 6 beyond genetic differences and disorders. (From Albinism 2012)

Rick Guidotti

Listen

11:50

Lake Effect's Stephanie Lecci interviews photographer and Positive Exposure founder Rick Guidotti.

Photographer [Rick Guidotti](#) (<http://positiveexposure.org/about-the-program-2/rick-guidotti/>) has spent his career capturing beauty on film.

As a high fashion photographer, he for years documented the likes of Cindy Crawford and others he was told were beautiful. But today, his camera points a lens at the beauty in all of us and reminds us that a little person or someone with [albinism](#) (<http://www.albinism.org/>) is just as beautiful as a fashion model.

"I have never photographed a genetic disease," Guidotti says. "I have always photographed people."

Guidotti's career change came about after a chance encounter on a New York City street corner with a woman with albinism. Though he thought she was gorgeous, he realized

he'd never met a model who looked like her nor did he know much about the genetic condition.

While researching albinism, he came across clinical, often "horrible" photographs in medical books of people with albinism and other genetic conditions. He decided that he needed to change this immediately.

So Guidotti founded a nonprofit organization called [Positive Exposure](http://positiveexposure.org/about-the-program-2/rick-guidotti/) (<http://positiveexposure.org/about-the-program-2/rick-guidotti/>). The arts and advocacy group uses the visual arts to help people see beyond others' genetic and physical differences to the humanity in us all, and to "create a new standard of beauty."

The group also aims to empower those posing in front of the lens. As he began photographing people with albinism, he says many had never before seen themselves as beautiful.

"They see that reflection and they see beauty in that reflection for the first time often, and that changes everything," he says.

Guidotti recounts one encounter with a shy young woman with albinism whose self-esteem had been damaged by teasing and bullying. At first she didn't want her picture taken, but soon she relented. By the end of the photo shoot, a different person was standing in front of the lens.

"She said, 'Finally I can be proud of my albinism. I realize though that the hatred and abuse that I experience every single day will never disappear, but what will disappear is the hatred that I felt for myself,'" Guidotti says. "And that's what drives me every single day."

Guidotti recently brought his photography exhibit "Positive Exposure: The Spirit of Difference" to the Medical College of Wisconsin, for its MCW Muses event, sponsored by the Medical Humanities Program. He says it's important for medical students to be able to see beyond a disease to the humanity of the person.

"So now when I got to these conferences I bring med students with me and genetic counseling students with me and I shove them in the daycare...and they're seeing these kids not in the clinical environment or in crisis, they're seeing them having fun, they're seeing them being people," he says.

Hopefully this will bring better healthcare and better relationships between doctors and those with albinism or other genetic diseases, he says. Guidotti also hopes that this will encourage everyone with differences like these to just be people and to live life.

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