

## **UWO students to participate in annual day of awareness**

**by Derek Paulus - Monday, March 04, 2013**

<http://www.uwosh.edu/today/25656/uwo-students-to-participate-in-spread-the-word-campaign-march-6/>

The University of Wisconsin Oshkosh will help put an end to the use of the “R-word” by hosting a Spread the Word to End the Word campaign March 6 in the Reeve Memorial Union concourse from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

The event in Reeve is part of an effort by the Special Olympics, Best Buddies International and other supporters to end the use of the “R-word,” retarded, a word that has acquired a derogatory connotation over the years. The goal of the campaign is to educate the community on the effects language can have on people.

The day of awareness represents a partnership between several UW Oshkosh departments and organizations—Disability Support Services, LGBTQ Resource Center, Campus Awareness for Relationship Education and the Women’s Center. Visitors will have the opportunity to receive T-shirts and sign a pledge banner to recognize the way certain words can have hurtful and negative effects.

The Special Olympics made the switch in terminology from “mental retardation” to “intellectual and developmental disabilities” (IDD) for the first time in 2004. In 2009, youth both with and without IDD at the Special Olympics Global Youth Activation Summit were responsible for creating the Spread the Word to End the Word campaign. The first official day of awareness for the campaign was on March 31, 2009 and has since been an annual event supported by institutions worldwide.

Progress has already been made on both national and state levels. In 2010, a bill was passed into law that discarded the use of the terms “mental retardation” and “mentally retarded” in exchange for IDD for federal health, education and labor policy. The same improvement in terminology occurred in Wisconsin last year when the People First Law was approved for state statutes.

Spread the Word to End the Word currently has nearly 348,000 online pledges on their [website](#) from people promising to help remove the “R-word” from their vocabulary.

*Faculty, staff and students are encouraged to contribute calendar items, campus announcements and other good news to UW Oshkosh Today.*

- [Email the editors.](#)