

# Varga's 'Footprints' Carry Readers From Self-Doubt To Strength, Affirmation

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Specially Written for *The Westfield Leader and The Times*

**WESTFIELD** — A Westfield woman has chronicled her lifelong battle against disability and discrimination in a recently released book entitled "Footprints in the Sand: A Disabled Woman's Inspiring Journey to Happiness."

Author Josie Varga has battled cerebral palsy from birth. She has also struggled with hearing loss and skin cancer. She hopes her book will inspire others to overcome their personal challenges.

As a child, Varga was often ridiculed and called stupid because of her cerebral palsy.

"It was hard to get past the stigma," she told *The Westfield Leader and The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times*, adding that she often felt sorry for herself as she was growing up, and tried hard to get people to acknowledge her.

"Back then, I thought I had to make everyone like me, but today I know that it is impossible to satisfy everyone," Varga clarified. "I am okay with that because the only person I need to satisfy is me."

As a graduate of Rowan University with a degree in communication and journalism, Varga faced discrimination in the workplace. Her bilateral high and low frequency nerve deafness that resulted from the cerebral palsy was often perceived by prospective employers to be a disadvantage.

Even Varga's father discouraged her from setting her goals too high.

"It took me a long time to realize that he was trying to protect me," Varga explained.

Over the years, Varga was able to transform the negativity she encountered into strength. The more people told her she should not try to accomplish her goals, the more determined she became.

Prior to the passing of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in

1990, Varga worked her way up from Assistant Editor to Assistant Director of Communications to Director of Communications in a firm whose name she holds confidential. Eventually, she became a successful communication consultant.

"If I had a choice, I would not change the fact that I was born with cerebral palsy," Varga continued. "My disability has made me rich, not in money, but in becoming the strong person I am today."

"Footprints in the Sand" challenges the reader to focus on the positive side of life, no matter what it brings. Varga uses her bout with melanoma in 2000 after the birth of her oldest daughter to illustrate that it is not what happens to you, it is how you respond to what happens.

"We need to take the negatives that life sends us and turn them into positives," she said. "I wrote 'Footprints in the Sand' because I want to inspire others to overcome. Not only

the disabled community, but everyone who reads my book. We all have our weaknesses and strengths. Hopefully, my book will inspire others to concentrate on their strengths."

Varga is currently working on two additional inspirational books. She is seeking reader contributions for them.

For one project, "Up to the Challenge," Varga is looking for heart-warming and inspiring stories from those who have chosen to concentrate on ability and not disability. More details about this book, as well as Varga's other writing projects are available on her website, [www.josievarga.com](http://www.josievarga.com).

Josie and her husband, John, have two pre-school age daughters, Lia Josephine and Erica Ann.

Josie will be signing copies of "Footprints in the Sand: A Disabled Woman's Inspiring Journey to Happiness" on Saturday, May 22, at The Town Book Store in Westfield from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.



Photo by Dave Rossi  
Josie Varga



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