

Center Stage

Innermotion Dance Company Becomes a Key Player at Stanford

BY SAMANTHA ROJAS

Lights, Camera, Action! Innersmotion finds itself on center stage.

Center stage of a healing and empowerment program for victims of sexual abuse...center stage of dance performances that reach out to the community through the medium of art...and center stage of Stanford University Graduate School of Business' executive studies on nonprofits arts organizations program. The spotlight is on and the performers are ready to go.

Thirteen years of dedication and passion have, within the last two years, brought Sharon Daugherty and Innersmotion Inc. to a point of significant visibility. "There are probably other survivor groups, but they come and go," says Daugherty, "not that we're the only ones in the world doing it, but we may be the only ones doing it for 13 years." Arriving at this point has brought several new questions to light, she notes.

Mission statements, goals and resource allocation have now become the central focus for this driven entrepreneur and her dance troupe. The need to balance psychological and emotional goals against economic and financial viability is just one of the reasons why Innersmotion was chosen from a group of 60 not-for-profit arts organizations to be a case study for the fellows and students at Stanford University.

"In particular, the one thing intriguing to me was that this was a kind of hybrid performing arts organization and social service organization," says James A. Phills Jr., acting associate professor of organizational behavior, Stanford Graduate School of Business (GSB), and academic director for the GSB Center for Social Innovation. "So, do you analyze them from the perspective of the theater/dance company

or from the perspective of mental health, and what are the ramifications on the mission and outcome of goals based on the direction you decide?"

The story of Innersmotion is reflective of Sharon's healing process from abuse as a child. From its grassroots days to recent national recognition, Innersmotion has taken on the life of a healing and blossoming survivor. Originally from Fort Lauderdale, Daugherty graduated from Florida Atlantic University with a bachelor of psychology degree and went on to do her master's in counseling and human services at Florida State University in Tallahassee. Always with a personal passion for motion, she involved herself in various dance groups over the years. When she began to sense the powerful mixture of her academic group work, personal experience and her passion for healing through movement, Innersmotion was born.

Innersmotion comprises six dancers including understudies, and more than 20 volunteers. Each one brings a personal history as well as a passion for eradicating incest and abuse from the world. The members of Innersmotion choose themselves to be warriors of this cause. It's a lofty goal, but one that Sharon and her colleagues feel empowered to dream into reality.

The background for being a principal dancer with Innersmotion is to be an empowered survivor willing to go public with one's full name, face and identity with no shame. Members participate in a 12-week session of movement groups and an all-day workshop. They are also required to volunteer for Innersmotion offstage for six months. It takes a year and half before the person is ready to take on the performance part of their healing.



Ready to go on stage and work through their childhood pains with the powerful medium of motion, the end product is inspiring dance theater that tells a story of abuse, survival and empowerment.

"When you dance from the heart and your soul, the message is so powerful, it has a certain kind of impact," says Daugherty, whose personal mission for Innermotion is to eradicate incest and sexual abuse in the world.

"By healing, you break the cycle," Daugherty says. So whether it is healing through dance, workshops, education or training – and really, it is all of the above – questions have surfaced because of the latest developments in the Innermotion momentum; questions that Stanford University Professor Jim Phills found to be interesting matter for discussion and academic study.

"What is unique about Innermotion was this dual mission of eradicating sexual abuse through education and creating awareness while healing survivors through the movement workshops and performances. Is there a need to make this choice?" asks Daugherty. "Can't both be accomplished at the same time?" Strategic and economic planning for efficient allocation of resources says "no." As one of the dancers of Innermotion says, "it would take 50 Sharons to do all the things that we would like to do."

In 13 years, four productions have been created, beginning with *Show and Tell*, a dramatic and hard-hitting reenactment of the journey of an abuse victim that moves through the stages of retreat to the inner child where healthy growth is stunted by the crime, and allows that child to re-develop through the process of a safe and exposed healing environment.

The latest production, *Incest Boot Camp*, is a comedy chronicle. It's said that when you can laugh about something, you're almost home. So the members of Innermotion talk of all the outrageously funny things they say to each other at weekly meetings, dance rehearsals and volunteer work.

Continued on page 7

Innermotion *Continued from page 5*

For the last 13 years, they have met once a week. "Every Tuesday from 6:30 to 8 p.m. is held sacred," says Daugherty. "We work jobs, school and all other commitments around that." They found that allowing themselves to laugh at the most inappropriate things gave rise to a lightening up that enabled a special kind of healing and exposed another part of their psyche. As they consider themselves field warriors for this cause, they are "waging war" – hence the name *Incest Boot Camp*.

Daugherty says Innermotion has reached more than 50,000 people in its audiences over the years. They are forging ahead to multiply this number with plans for a TV pilot, a documentary and another case study at Harvard University. "With the focus that we already have on programs, performances, events, major supporters and funding," says Daugherty, "we even have our eye on an Australian collaboration. We aim to keep forging ahead and expanding."

A position at center stage in a global spotlight might just be the future for this band of angels with a cause.

For further information about Innermotion, call (954) 537-0636 or visit www.innermotion.org. ★

Samantha Rojas is public relations writer for the Broward Cultural Division.



Sharon Daugherty

James A. Phills Jr.

Cultural Quarterly

Summer 2003

Volume XVI, Number 3

A BROWARD COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS PUBLICATION