



Leymis Bolaños Wilmott and Fuzión Dance Artists Arts and Health Integration Work through Dance and Movement

From an early age, Leymis Bolaños Wilmott, co-founder along with Rachael Inman, of Fuzión Dance Artists, understood the power and transformative properties of dance and movement-not just for a few, but for everyone. Growing up in a household where the beauty of dance surrounded her, Leymis' family created community and a tradition of celebration through the language of dance that to this day is being reinvented and reinterpreted by her and her company of dance artists.



It's a Tuesday morning at Parkinson Place in Sarasota. Each of the more than 25 participants with mixed abilities, including 10 men and women who have been with the program since its beginning, are prepared to be uplifted and spirited away by the dance and joyful music filling the room. Leymis (seated center in black pants in photo) has been coming to Parkinson Place for more than 2 years. It is through her direction that each person, wise elders as she calls them, will have a life-affirming experience through gentle and, at times, guided movements.

She, along with her drumming partner and Fuzión dancer, Jahrel Thompson, and several assistants, are the "heart beat" of the Tuesday and Thursday morning gatherings. The hour-long movement and dance programs, accompanied by Jahrel's Cuban-style rhythmic drumming, seek to empower and to celebrate the human spirit while tapping into the healing powers of creative expression. (To learn how dance has become a life line for so many and for a glimpse at one of

Fuzión Dance Artist's jazz movement classes at Parkinson Place, visit <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CnxfT7lx8XY>.

Research has shown that dance has the capacity to improve motor control, balance and locomotion in persons diagnosed with Parkinson's disease. Leymis will conduct a before and after survey of energy levels and range of motion-encouraging each person to share a gesture or simple movement-which then helps inform her as she meets people where they are, both physically and emotionally, during morning classes.



For Leymis, and by extension Fuzión Dance Artists, the path to connecting with Parkinson Place, Very Special Arts, Access Education and other organizations dedicated to enhancing the lives of people with mixed abilities seems, in hindsight, inevitable. At a very young age, Leymis experienced and witnessed how this art form could break through the barriers of tradition and allow anyone, no matter what their physical abilities or emotional challenges, to joyfully express themselves through dance and movement. This focus and desire to shift any culturally-placed limitations on what is possible and by whom is at the core of Fuzión Dance Artists' existence.

"Life is sometimes hard," acknowledges Leymis. For members of Fuzión Dance Artists, relying on dance as a tool to move through the challenges faced by the diverse client populations the company serves and to promote better health, well-being and a community where the focus is placed on the person and not the disease, feels right. This is what they were meant to be doing at this particular time and place.

In all her classes, Leymis will cultivate an environment that allows individuals to be tactile, creative, confident, imaginative and the story-tellers of their feelings while being aware of their own bodies in relation to the space and people surrounding them. Leymis and her team have observed that although gate and stride can be a challenge for someone living with Parkinson's, movement as well as posture during class is often stronger, better balanced and more assured.

Today, with her new-found passion for dance training emerging, Leymis Bolaños Wilmott and Fuzión Dance Artists are ready to connect with the next generation of dancers while continuing to push the boundaries of what those with mixed abilities can and cannot do, empowering them in creative and nurturing ways-all in an atmosphere of acceptance and non-judgment.

For more information about Fuzión Dance Artists including their arts and health integration work using dance and movement, upcoming programs, performances and summer intensive classes, visit their website at www.FuzionDance.org.