

The 'Humans Being' Project

Photography by Tom Vogt

With the continued rise in popularity of social media, isn't it time we stopped to ask ourselves, is anybody actually listening?

By Chris Penhall

You could safely assume that with access to all sorts of platforms to communicate – from mobile phones, social media sites, You Tube, blogging – that everyone has a way to tell their story if they so wished.

But with all of this opportunity to speak, there comes no guarantee that anyone will actually listen; and with our reliance on technology, have we forgotten the value of sitting down face to face with another human being and actually talking to them about who we are and what we are about?

This is something that Lynnette Curtis, the co-ordinator of the Humans Being project, is recreating. This community story telling project encourages people to get together and

listen and learn from each other in a safe and encouraging environment.

The project is "a grass roots celebration and appreciative enquiry into the everyday business of common life", which aims to dissolve barriers, challenge assumptions and deepen understanding.

"When you are speaking in a room of people who are purely there to listen to you, it's overwhelming and powerful," explained Lynnette. "It's ancient behaviour; we're not reinventing the wheel here - we sit in circles and story tell like our ancestors used to do."

Lynette ran the first project in October 2011 as a response to things that were going on around her.

"Friends were feeling frustrated and unheard," she said, "It was a response to what people were asking for."

18 people attended and Lynnette built a little stage in her kitchen especially for the event. Five people spoke and time was factored in afterwards for questions. Some people left with more questions than answers, some have gone on to try new things, and one person left their job and started another one as a result of

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EmergeArts - Opportun

An inclusive platform of arts and creativity joining together people from all walks of life

By Chris Penhall

Professional performer Donna Fallows had trained as a dancer from the age of ten, but her career was suddenly cut short when an accident meant she was confined to a wheelchair for a few months.

This experience gave her some insight into the problems faced by other people whose movement, whether physical or otherwise, was restricted in some way, and was the impetus behind the development of EmergeArts in Southend

She had begun to lecture in Performing Arts at a local college and was developing her idea to set up an inclusive theatre company, when she was invited to visit The Chicken Shed, based in North London. The Company, set up in 1974, aims to celebrate diversity to initiate positive change and was a huge inspiration for Donna in setting up her own project in Essex.

Aiming to bring together everyone with or without physical difficulties, mental health issues or learning disabilities, EmergeArts works across a platform of arts, creativity and the environment.

Catering for both children and adults, it provides a weekly programme of classes and workshops and all students have the opportunity to take part in performances and events, plus all its venues are fully wheelchair

accessible.

Last year, EmergeArts produced *Express: Evolve: Emerge 2012*. A community project,

it involved all of the Emerge members from all walks of life, and was designed to break down barriers. The performance was inspired by the Prittlewell Priory and the local history of Southend and its surrounding areas, with all profits donated to Little Havens Children's Hospice.

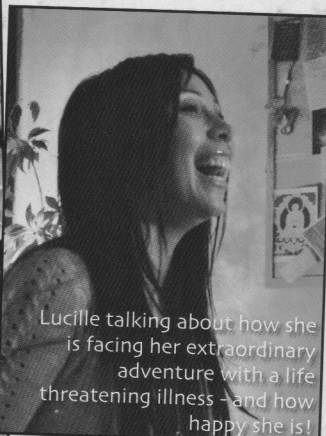
Vicki Ellis, who played Queen of the present day in the performance, was suffering from depression when she became an Emerge Arts member, and has progressed so much that she has become a certified Emerge Arts teacher.

She says, "Emerge has been a real soul saver. I came to it at a bad time in my life. Through Emerge and its classes I was taught that to be yourself was alright - now I am better than myself and an Emerge teacher. Thank you Emerge."



Vicki Ellis playing Queen in *Express: Evolve: Emerge 2012*

Lynette discussing how the project has taken on a life of its own



Lucille talking about how she is facing her extraordinary adventure with a life threatening illness - and how happy she is!

two-way process - the listening is as important as the speaking.

"Unless you belong to a club or therapy group, where do people go

to get that unconditional?

Artist Aoife, who attended the first meeting said of the experience, "I learnt a lot and sorted out some thoughts in my head. So worthwhile, simple, real and easy."

And Photographer, Tim Vogt, said, "No mosh, no lip service, no mystic visions - just a real window with a different view of the world in front of me."

For more information on forthcoming events, contact Lynnette Curtis, Dip.RSA, PGCEE, Certifide Clean Language Coach, Facilitator and Emotional Educator
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There is also a short film on You Tube about the project: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6tjJOrvXyVY>

participating in Humans Being.

The idea is to listen to people properly and have the opportunity to learn from people you may not encounter otherwise and actually find

Graham sharing some fundamental questions about the meaning of his life and his positive intentions for the future

out about them and what's going on inside rather than making assumptions about what they are like based on what they do for a living or how they look.

"It's really a dialogue project," said Lynnette. "It's about valuing people's space and it's a

10 Things

MONDAY NIGHT

DOODLE - The Ship, Leigh

#7

The Monday Night Doodle is an event organized by The Pouch of Douglas's Paul Range-Dye. It is a very relaxed getting together of doodlers, scribblers

and drawists from Leigh, Westcliff and Southend. Usually held at 8pm at The Ship in Leigh-on-Sea, all you need is to bring some pens and pencils, have a doodle and a chat and maybe a weak lemon drink or beverage of your choosing! Paul says, "There's no pressure to show and tell, look at anyone else's doodles (!) or even open your eyes ... or even sit near us. Just come along and play ..."

The Monday Night Doodle

For more details Like the Facebook Page 'The Monday Night Doodle'

>> RECOMMENDED

ity for Everyone

The script was mostly written by the Emerge team with some input from members, but such was the positive impact of participating in the project that in July 2013 the company are presenting *Emerging Shorts*; as a Showcase evening, the members are using all their own material in a mixture of solo and group work.

"This time the members are very much in the driving seat; we are following them and not the other way round." Says Donna.

"We believe that every person is an individual with unique gifts and abilities and we are not as effective on our own; we are better when we work as a community together and we can chase our ideas, our inspirations and dreams," she continues, "We naturally want to support others and bring them forward, and when we do that we start naturally to come to that and bring each other forward. It opens up the platform of equality."

As well as these one-off performances, Emerge run *Open Creative Space* - a weekly workshop which is completely inclusive and encourages skills sharing, developing peer skills, and interpersonal, social and life experience development.

Adam Davies says of the dance sessions that are included at the beginning of the weekly classes, "The power of music in Emerge Conscious Dance is so powerful, it makes me dance in the way that makes me free and alive, to move my hands and body freely and to finally be lifted away from the burdens and the weights of the day I've have left behind. There's two sides of me, and one side has to rest and disappear as I dance. That side being the stressed and hard worked side ... the free Adam is the Adam you see in Emerge, the fun loving and relaxed guy with fun in his heart and the eagerness to go on and move forwards."

And as well as their weekly classes and group projects, Emerge Arts



Adam Davies: Community Day 2010

offers paid employment and teacher training for young people in the area, via their regular weekly activities *Emerge Outreach Programme*.

"If you have studied drama, dance or performing arts, then please get in contact", says Donna.

For more information on classes, projects and training and teaching opportunities, call 07838 889187, e-mail emergeartsdonna@googlegmail.com, or visit www.emergecommunity.co.uk



Adam Davies