

involved in it." Regarding her fellow chairs, Anka mentions how great it was to have each chair contribute their own individual talents: "it was a unison of different talents... we worked together as a team very well."

As a dance enthusiast who has worked alongside dancers at American Ballet Theatre, and as a sponsor for principal dancer at ABT, Ethan Stiefel, Anka empathizes with all of the various aspects of a dancer's life. "I know how much practice goes into perfecting the art form. Their lives are so dedicated ... for not that great of a remuneration. And if you ask a dancer — they will tell you its something they must do — they have to dance." Anka also understands how dancers develop strong bonds with other dancers during their performance careers. Working together for long hours, dancers form a special kinship with their colleagues. "This is why it is especially difficult for dancers to leave their dance careers. To leave this community is very tough for them." This is an issue Anka relates to first hand, as Mr. Stiefel has recently injured himself and has had to refrain from dancing. With the thought of not being able to perform again looming over him, Ethan has looked towards his fellow dancers for support. Anka's involvement with CTFD reflects her concern for these life-altering issues: "I just want to really do good and help dancers."

Through her work, Anka is exposed to all of the stages of a dancer's life — the steps towards establishing a successful career and maintaining it, as well as the issues dancers face when contemplating new career options. Anka has witnessed these daunting and fragile moments in a dancer's life, and possesses great compassion to want to help them during these processes. Thus, through the Clarence Y. Palitz Scholarship Fund at CTFD, which Anka created six years ago to honor her late husband, Anka has benefited the lives of 25 deserving CTFD clients. The dance community is lucky to have such a wonderful cheerleader rooting for them. Acknowledging just how lucky they are to have her on board, CTFD has chosen to commemorate Anka's contribution towards its success and growth by honoring her in its 22nd Anniversary Jubilee gala next October. This will be a very special event, marking Anka's fourteen years with the organization. As honoree, Anka deserves all of the recognition she receives, for this organization thrives on the counsel, love and dedication of people like her.

Confessions of a Dancer

By Michael Blake

I read Stephen Pier's article, "After The Dancing Stops," and recognized myself. I was a modern dancer with the companies of Murray Louis, José Limón, and Donald Byrd for 22 glorious years before severe arthritis of the hip brought a halt to my career at age 40. I needed a lot of help finding a new identity and a new career, and I was lucky enough to get that help from a great organization.

Dancing was all I'd done since I began at 18; I went to college for dance and never looked back. But when the pain in my hip went from inhibiting me from working fully to stopping me from working altogether, I went to two doctors who concurred: I needed to stop dancing and consider surgery.

My career of more than two decades was over. What does a dancer do then? I cried for about a month without stopping. I hid in my apartment, drinking heavily and watching movies on TV. Without dance, I didn't want to live. What other skills did I have? I had never even waited a table in my life (which I shamelessly boasted about during my career). I went from being the lucky dancer who was always working to someone who had no income.

But I had bills to pay. Depressed or not, I needed my booze and cable service! I got out of bed and stumbled upon an organization called **Career Transition For Dancers** in New York City (there is also a branch in Los Angeles). I went to CTFD in tears, and sat in an office with career counselor, Suzie Jary. I was embarrassed, angry, and upset — but Ms. Jary let me know I was not alone. We made a detailed list of my interests. We set goals. I was skeptical at first, but I had nothing to lose. Much to my surprise, there were many options on that list — not easily met, but obtainable possibilities. Those options gave me confidence. Not being alone gave me strength. I took control of my life again.

I couldn't go back to the physical demands of full-time modern dance, but I could still perform. I had never done a Broadway show, yet always dreamed of doing just that. I took voice lessons, while I taught dance to make money. I auditioned for everything I saw in the trade papers.

I landed a tour of **Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat**, starring Deborah Gibson and Patrick Cassidy. So what if I was the oldest in the cast, at 41! When the tour was over, I didn't waste time being depressed — I went back to CTFD. I enrolled at Empire State College to complete the undergraduate degree I had never finished; CTFD even gave scholarship me a grant to help pay the tuition. When I finished that degree with honors, I went on for a graduate degree, also partially funded by the organization.



National Dance Institute of New Mexico,
Rosie's Broadway Kids with Billy Porter

Photo: Richard Termine

Balam Dance Theatre

Photo: Richard Termine

Sachiyo Ito

Photo: Richard Termine

James Earl Jones

Photo: Richard Termine