Annual Newsletter: A Year In The Life
July 1, 2011 – June 30, 2012

Shedding light on mental health issues through theatre
erasing the DISTANCE
Dear Supporters,

It’s been a big year for Erasing the Distance. After a valuable strategic visioning process with the Arts and Business Council, ETD decided to re-define our programming model. This fiscal year, we unveiled and implemented three distinct branches of our work designed to shed light on mental health issues through theatre.

ETD for Hire uses our repertoire of over 50 true stories to unlock curriculum, conferences, meetings, and initiatives regarding mental health throughout Chicago and beyond. We pair horses with schools, community organizations, faith groups, and more to use our innovative theatrical programming to educate and spark dialogue around issues like depression, bipolar disorder, and addiction.

Our Outreach and Education branch is all about engaging with the community. Through our outreach programs, we help young people tell and perform their own mental health stories through long-term residencies. Our educational program helps current and future clinicians, artists, and mental health advocates learn our unique form of docu-drama and use it as a tool for advocacy and social change in their communities.

Our biggest shift in programming this year was our inaugural Artistic Season, which was launched to great success. After six years of doing one-night-only commissioned performances, we are now reaching more of the general public with our shows and couldn’t be more excited about it.

I had the utter pleasure of directing our production of Finding Peace in this House, which was the opener of our season. This show is very near and dear to my heart. I felt like many of us search to find peace in the houses of our bodies, our hearts, and our minds—whether we have a mental illness or not—and the play’s storytellers touched so beautifully crafted and acted and the flow of the post-show conversation was great. Very inspiring.

—audience member

Our second show of the season was Good Enough, beautifully directed by longtime ETD Friend, veteran director and brand-new ETD staff member Geneva Thompson. Good Enough was inspired by the life of Rebecca Linn Collier, who left our world too soon after her battle with bipolar disorder. The stories that comprised this world premiere featured women who have also had those battles and were brave enough to share the truth of their journeys with us.

We are thrilled to bring our new season to you in just a few short months. Stay tuned for more….

Warmest Regards,

Brighid O’Shaughnessy

ETD Founder/Executive Artistic Director

A Note from the Executive Artistic Director

ETD for Hire

Erasing the Distance (ETD) has a vast repertoire of stories that explore various mental health issues and feature people of different ages, cultural backgrounds, racial groups, and perspectives. Clients select which stories they would like to see at their event, and our ensemble of professional actors then perform the stories at schools, faith groups, conferences, community organizations and workplaces across the state and country. Here are just some of the places ETD FOR HIRE visited this past year.

DCFS Latino Family Institute Conference

Beyond OCD Event

The Arts Center of Oak Park

2nd Annual School Mental Health Conference

For more information, visit the ETD FOR HIRE section of our website at www.erasingthedistance.org.
ETD took a huge step forward in our programming this year with the exciting launch of our inaugural artistic season.

This new programming initiative was conceived as an opportunity for more of the general public to experience the work we do, and the results far exceeded our expectations. Both shows in our season not only included our signature post-show conversations, but also actor training, on-site support, and reference materials from mental health professionals. The performances were greeted with consistently full houses and amazing audience feedback. We are very proud to declare our first-ever artistic season a resounding success!

**Finding Peace in This House**

JANUARY 23, 24, 30 & 31, 2012

Finding Peace In This House made its world premiere at the Chicago Cultural Center in June 2011 before being remounted as the opening show of our season. Created in partnership with The Chicago School of Professional Psychology, the play explored how a person’s “house” can represent many things—a terror-filled home, a body that abandons you, a haunting past, or even a literal prison.

**Finding Peace In This House** left me wondering about every person that I saw on the way home.

This production...is stunning to witness. — K.D. Hopkins, Chicago Theatre Beat

**Good Enough**

MAY 14, 15, 21 & 22, 2012

Good Enough was a world premiere production sponsored by Rebecca’s Dream that featured the true stories of five remarkable women living with depression and bipolar disorder. Through waves of humor, anger, hope and pain, each woman navigated her own unique path toward discovering just what it means to be “good enough.”

This show has all the emotional sweep and intellectual rigor of great art. Directed with graceful precision by Genevieve Thompson, *Good Enough* gives us five meticulous performers who tell simple, first-person stories chronicling the isolation, agony, and chaos that mental illness can bring.

—Justin Hayford, Chicago Reader

**COMING SOON: ETD’s 2012–2013 SEASON!**

**Will You Stand Up?**

APRIL 8, 9, 15 & 16, 2013

**Title TBA**

**NOV. 12, 13, 19 & 20, 2012**

Will You Stand Up? A visceral and moving production that explores the impact violence can have on mental health. Directed by Jason Economus

Title TBA An exciting new show created in collaboration with students from University of Illinois at Chicago that focuses on the mental health experiences of Asian-Americans. Directed by Reshmi Hazra

**Erasing the Distance has made a brilliant and moving production out of a tender subject matter.**

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This production...is stunning to witness. — K.D. Hopkins, Chicago Theatre Beat
OUTREACH

ETD continued our outreach relationship this year with Chicago’s Al Raby High School. Brighid O’Shaughnessy and ETD artistic associate Jessica Kadish led a four-month residency as part of the students’ service learning. The residency culminated in a self-created performance staged for a standing-room-only audience of parents, siblings, grandparents, and other supporters. The students bravely shared their own mental health stories through poetry and monologues, and the show was followed by a spirited dialogue that helped ignite honest and healing communication between the students and their families.

“...I love about the ETD residency program is that it feels like gaining a second family.”
— Al Raby student

EDUCATION

ETD leads presentations, workshops, trainings, and longer-term programs throughout the year to teach artists, mental health advocates, and current/future health professionals our specific methodology of gathering, transcribing, and staging true stories. This year, our biggest educational partnership was with The Chicago School of Professional Psychology (TCSPP).

Under the guidance of Brighid O’Shaughnessy, over a dozen TCSPP students conducted and transcribed interviews from individuals touched by mental health issues throughout the Fall 2011 and Spring 2012 semesters. The students then edited and shaped the interviews into theatrical monologues to be performed by professional actors in a one-night-only, world premiere event entitled In Less Than A Day.

“The ETD Service Learning project spins into motion a chain reaction of give and take, of apprehension and acceptance, of ignorance and education. It unites two worlds that may not otherwise be united.”
— TCSPP student

Get Involved

There are many ways to get involved with Erasing the Distance. Here are just a few:

• Donate.
• Share your story.
• Volunteer your time.
• Subscribe to our email list.
• Spread the word about ETD!

For more information, visit the Get Involved page on our website at www.ErasingtheDistance.org

In Less Than A Day

JUNE 25, 2012

Adapted by: Kimberly Gresyn-Boot, Shrujal Joshi, Allison O’Hara, Brighid O’Shaughnessy, Jonathan Saavedra & Elizabeth Smith

Directed by: Jason Economus

Performed by: Kierra Bunch, Millicent Hurley, Nick Polus, Craig Thompson & Michael Torrey

Production Team: Deanna Foley (Stage Manager), Brighid O’Shaughnessy (Production Manager) and Evan Holmes (Music)

Created in partnership with The Chicago School of Professional Psychology.

Whether losing a parent, becoming homeless, or walking into a treatment program for the first time, In Less Than A Day illustrated just how quickly a person’s life can change in powerful and significant ways.

“I wanted to tell you how much I enjoyed the show. It was so thoughtfully crafted, well-acted and moving. The post-show discussion was excellent too, a great way to make sure that people who need to talk and share after the experience get a chance to.”

— In Less Than A Day audience member

In Less Than A Day photos by Cory DeWald.
Three stories performed at the 2011–2012 Annual School Mental Health Conference, Lisle, IL.

In Less Than A Day World Premiere!
Created in partnership with The Chicago School of Professional Psychology.

Three stories performed by ETD artists and volunteers.

JAN 11
Scoti Morgan’s Windy City Times article profiling Friendly Place in This House.

APRIL 6
Reading of In Less Than A Day by The Chicago School of Professional Psychology.

MAR 21
Three stories performed at Hersey High School in Arlington Heights, IL.

MAR 8
ETD feature in Aeon.org, the NAMI publication on mental illness for the Spanish-speaking community.

DEC 8
Brogli O’Shaughnessy leads an interactive workshop on the ETD methodology for community members at the Akersan Brothers’ Anti-Violence Workshop.

DEC 6
Brogli O’Shaughnessy is a featured guest on local access cable channel CAN-TV with Rainbow House Executive Director Kathleen Higgins.

DEC 5
All-Rahy High School students perform their own true stories about mental health as a part of ETD’s Fall 2011 semester residency program.

NOV 30
Five stories performed at Loyola University.

NOV 20
Brogli O’Shaughnessy leads a workshop on the ETD methodology for the Active Minds Conference at the University of Maryland.

NOV 17
Five stories performed at the DCFS Latino Family Institute Conference in Lisle, IL.

NOV 15
Two stories performed at Loyola University.

NOV 12
Finding Peace in This House Remembers the request at the First Christian Church of Gurnee, IL.

NOV 8
Finding Peace in This House Remembers the request at the First Christian Church of Gurnee, IL.

NOV 7
Two stories performed at Loyola Academy.

NOV 4
Two stories performed at The Arts Center of Oak Park as part of Say It Out Loud’s kick-off event.

OCT 28
Four stories performed at the Illinois School Social Work Conference in Lisle, IL.

OCT 25
Performance at Rainbow House’s gala at the National Museum of Mexican Art in Chicago.

OCT 24
Two stories performed on OCD and one on social anxiety profiled at Loyola Academy.

OCT 17
Two stories performed at Warren Township High School in Gurnee, IL.

OCT 14
ETD Artistic Associates Jessica Kashid and Irene Patino speak about OCD on 90.9 FM’s Beto Latino, a radio program dedicated to reaching the Latino and Spanish-speaking communities.

OCT 12
Five stories performed at Oakton Community College in Des Plaines.

OCT 11
OCD: Real Stories — Real People Three stories about OCD performed at Ann Sather Restaurant along with three speakers from Beyond OCD.

OCT 9
Story Sharing Day Opportunity for people with mental health stories to be interviewed by ETD artists and volunteers.

SEP 30
ETD actors perform reading of K.J. Hardy’s Erotica at Flushing University.

SEP 13
Brogli O’Shaughnessy appears on local access cable channel CAN-TV alongside Rainbow House Executive Director Kathleen Higgins.

AUG 15
Four month residency program at A Rahy High School begins.

JUL 22
ETD’s Annual Gala: Embracing Diverse Threads Latin Rhythms Dance Studio, Chicago, IL. Featuring international cuisine by Hel’s Kitchen and music by The Robert Cornelius 7. Sponsored by SHR Denton, Pierson Meyer and The Jellyvision Lab.

JUL 17
Two stories performed in Spanish as part of the National Alliance on Mental Illness’s National Convention.

JUL 9
Two stories performed at Schuler Scholars at Warren Township High School in Gurnee, IL.

JUN 25
Performance at Rainbow House’s gala at the National Museum of Mexican Art in Chicago.

JUN 23
Three stories performed at the 2011–2012 Annual School Mental Health Conference, Lisle, IL.

JAN 18
Three stories performed at the 2011–2012 Annual School Mental Health Conference, Lisle, IL.

DEC 26
Performance at Rainbow House through a partnership with NAMI Metro Suburban.

MAR 4
Two stories performed at Proviso West High School.

DEC 26
Two stories performed at River Grove Village High School.

SEP 7
Finding Peace in This House Remembers the request at the first Christian Church of Gurnee, IL.

SEP 3
Story about anorexia and one on bipolar and one on eating disorders performed at Loyola Academy.

JUL 29
Two stories performed at Elk Grove Village High School.

FEB 22
ETD feature on WCIC TV’s morning show with Dr. Mark; Morning with Melissa Forman and Jeannine Sparrow.

FEB 19
ETD’s Elen Grove Village High School profiled in Chicago Tribune feature article by reporter Barbara Brtomin.

FEB 10
Brogli O’Shaughnessy discusses ETD’s residency project at Northwestern University’s Theater in Our Schools Conference: Communities Engaging Minds.

FEB 26
Brogli O’Shaughnessy and ETD storyteller Reverend Cheryl Magrini appear on NBC TV’s web series Different Drummer.

FEB 9
Two stories performed at Elk Grove Village High School.

FEB 5
Story about anorexia and one on bipolar and one on eating disorders performed at Loyola Academy.

FEB 3
Three stories performed at The Chicago School of Professional Psychology’s Cultural Impact Conference.

JAN 27
Three stories performed at The Chicago School of Professional Psychology.

NOV 30
Five stories performed at Loyola University.

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JUL 17
Two stories performed in Spanish as part of the National Alliance on Mental Illness’s National Convention.

JUL 9
Two stories performed at Lake Forest High School as part of their Depression Awareness Week.

MAY 7
Two stories performed at Three Counseling Center’s gala in Oak Park, IL.

MAY 5
Three stories performed at the 2011–2012 Annual School Mental Health Conference, Lisle, IL.

MAY 4
Two stories performed at Elk Grove Village High School.

MAY 3
Story about anorexia and one on bipolar and one on eating disorders performed at Loyola Academy.

MAY 2
Two stories performed at Proviso West High School.

MAY 1
Three stories performed at The Chicago School of Professional Psychology.

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