

Getting involved
outside the studio

Dancing for a Cause

BY NANCY ALFARO

Dance can be a moral transporter as well as an artistic one. It's a form that joins the heart and mind and has the power to bridge different worlds. *Dance Magazine* interviewed several artists who are using dance to engage in, or raise awareness for, a variety of causes.

Boulder, Colorado's Eco Arts was founded by **Marda Kirn**. Her mission is to bring together science, environmental arts, and indigenous organizations to increase awareness about climate change and sustainable living. Eco Arts' projects combine the cognitive power of science with the emotional power of art to get people to think about these issues. "We try to be scientifically accurate and to have as many full-on collaborations as possible," says Kirn, who also edits the International Tap Association Newsletter. This is where local dancer/choreographer **Michelle Ellsworth** comes in. She is collaborating with climate change scientist Jason Neff on a piece called *The Wheels of Blame*, which will be performed in a program called "Balancing Acts: Visions for a Sustainable Future."

Dancer Ellsworth and scientist Neff believe that each of their native "languages" is inadequate for communicating ideas. Says Ellsworth, "We thought it would be pleasing to use each other's forms to make a hybrid that deals with the problem of global warming." Ellsworth is inspired by the rigor of science; and Neff, for his part, feels that dancers can help make scientific fact more easily digestible.

"The issue of global warming is not going away," says Ellsworth, "and its implications are enormous." Ellsworth hopes that if scientific evidence is presented through the lens of performance, peo-

ple will connect to the information in unexpected ways and begin to take action.

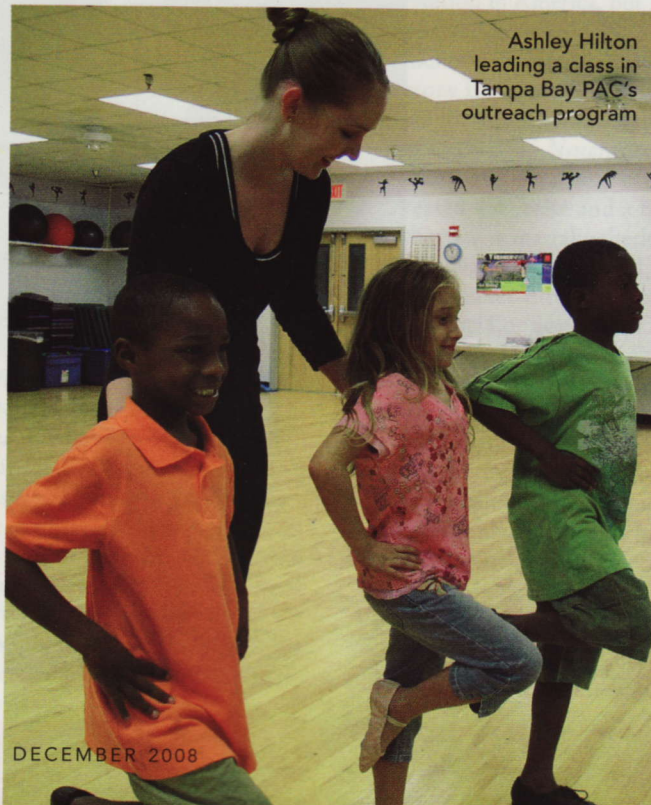
Tap, ballet and jazz dancer **Amy Danielson** got the idea for Genesis Sarajevo after volunteering to teach dance at a children's camp in war-torn Bosnia. In June of 2006 she offered her first dance intensive at the camp, which is sponsored by Foundation Land of Friendship and Peace in Kakringe, a town outside Sarajevo.

Danielson now travels to Bosnia twice a year for the two-week sessions. The students study technique, perform group exercises, and work together to put on a show. Her new goal is to bring tap and hip hop companies to mentor the students and have Genesis Sarajevo per-

form what they've developed. "I've been their only teacher for the past two years," she says. "Now I need to involve more people."

Danielson feels that young people in areas of conflict need this kind of outlet, and that dancing together provides a meeting ground for differing cultures and religions. "The ultimate goal is to have a fully functioning dance company in Sarajevo," says Danielson. "If some of the girls want to pursue dance professionally, they can go that route. And if they're just doing it for fun, they're getting an experience that they may never have had."

Eventually Danielson would like to



Ashley Hilton
leading a class in
Tampa Bay PAC's
outreach program

Kyle White, Courtesy Tampa Bay PAC