

Spotlight On: Amy Lehman

“You can’t give something without getting something back for it. The philosophy goes that even if all you get is the pleasure of giving, that’s your benefit. And there’s nothing wrong with that.”

Amy Lehman, a dancer from the age of five, and now a lawyer, has been on both sides of the altruistic equation: the support of her family and scholarships for her training made it possible for her to become a professional ballet dancer. At the end of her 15 year career, her transition from dancer to lawyer was smoothed by the emotional support of her network of friends and family.



Amy Lehman
CTFD client

Growing up as the only girl in a family of five children in Maryland, her parents encouraged Amy and her brothers to figure out what made them happy and to pursue it. After going *en pointe* at the age of 10, she switched ballet schools and began to study with Irena Prochotsky, a Czech defector and former soloist with the Czech National Ballet. Post high school graduation, Amy trained with the Royal Winnipeg Ballet as a student and a paid apprentice touring with the company. She danced with Ottawa Ballet from 1986-1992, where she was also acting ballet mistress and guested with the Royal Swedish Ballet. She freelanced in New York until 1996.

When a torn calf sidelined her dance career in 1996, she had been thinking about her identity as a dancer and preparing to transition for years. In 1994, she was living in New York City. “I knew that I’d have to stop someday and I wanted to know what the next steps were,” says Lehman, which is when she met with Career Counselor Suzie Jary at Career Transitions for Dancers. While performing with the Ottawa Ballet, she had taken college classes during her off-seasons to see what she was interested in. She later enrolled in New York University’s Gallatin School of Individualized Study to continue her education. With her parents’ support, Amy graduated in 1999 with a degree in Theater History and Dramatic Literature. After working for three years in the theater industry, she made the decision to go to law school, graduating in 2006 with a J.D. from the University of Michigan.

Now a second-year litigation associate with Fleming Zulack Williamson Zauderer LLP, Amy has had the opportunity to use her success as a dancer and lawyer to give back to the network of people who have assisted her, including CTFD. Amy has volunteered to help the organization in wide range of projects, from group counseling seminars to the organization’s fundraising efforts. She is also a regular contributor to the organization’s Dancers’ Resource Fund. Amy recognizes the fact that she is lucky to have danced for as long as she did, and

urges young dancers to appreciate every moment they are dancing and devote themselves to their careers, but to think about preparing for their transitions along with strategizing their dance careers right from the very beginning.

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