

REVELATIONS

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PHOTO BY ANDREW ECCLES

SHARON GERSTEN LUCKMAN CELEBRATES 10 YEARS AS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Longevity is a hallmark of the people who are touched by the legacy of Alvin Ailey. For everyone from Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's patrons and audience members to the artistic and administrative staff, AAADT becomes a continuing and important part of their lives. Executive Director Sharon Gersten Luckman is no exception. Luckman has spent her last 13 years at AAADT. She joined the Ailey family as director of development and three years later accepted the challenge of becoming executive director. October 2005 marks her tenth anniversary at the administrative helm of AAADT.

For Luckman, who before arriving at Ailey had previously launched a dance camp, directed a dance school and worked in arts administration (at Twyla Tharp Dance Foundation and Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts), being at AAADT "feels like a culmination of all I'd done before." And in the eyes of Luckman's mother, a dance teacher, "it was like I had become President of the United States—there was just no more important or prestigious job."

In fact, it was an AAADT performance that first inspired Luckman to envision a life dedicated to dance. She tells a true story about a time about nine years ago

when her family sold their home. "The people who bought the house found a bunch of letters in the attic and they gave them to my family. Included were letters from me when I was in my freshman year of college at the University of Wisconsin at Madison, and there was one letter that said, 'Dear Mom and Dad, now I know what I want to do with my life. I saw Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater last night.' It was amazing that we found this letter just after I had become executive director."

When thinking about her proudest moments as executive director, Luckman beams, "it has to be this building." At the public dedication of The Joan Weill Center for Dance on March 2, 2005, Luckman was filled with joy at seeing everyone together celebrating the largest space dedicated to dance in the country—a symbol of what Ailey means to New York City, to dance and to the arts. In the months since the public dedication, "I have been surprised and pleased by the reaction of the New York City dance and arts world to this building. Every day somebody says something to me with such enthusiasm and sincerity about this building and how incredible it is to have a building like this in New York City."

During her tenure as executive director, Luckman has kept a yellow post-it, now faded and frayed, on her wall. The note says, "An organization is as good as the people and process that deliver one day at a time." "I try to live by this quote," says Luckman. "Every single day you have to work at where you are going.

Big achievements happen slowly, one day at a time." According to the people who work with her, Luckman takes this credo to heart. "Sharon's spirit is a 'never-give-up spirit.' She constantly inspires us to work harder and never give up," explains Calvin Hunt, general manager of AAADT. Luckman likewise praises her staff, "I want people to understand the tremendous effort that goes on by the talented people behind the scenes before the audience sees a performance. I am so proud of people like Jodi Krizer, Pam Robinson, Bennett Rink and Calvin Hunt—an administrative team that has been together for so long. And I also am proud that we have been able to attract new and talented staff; it is a wonderful reflection on our organization that AAADT is a place where arts administrators want to be."

In the community, Luckman consistently garners recognition as a leader to be emulated. In 2002, Luckman received the Arts Management Award for Career Service; in 2004, she was awarded the Arts & Business Council's Encore Award for Arts Management Excellence. Most recently, in March 2005, Luckman was awarded the National Association of Women Business Owners—NYC Chapter's Signature Award for Community Service. "We have an extremely talented and

dynamic executive director in Sharon," acknowledges Joan Weill, chairman of the Board of Trustees of AAADT. "Her

"Sharon's boundless energy, intelligence and charisma have been instrumental in guiding the Ailey organization over the last decade. I am grateful for her dedication and her incredible ability to understand my artistic vision for the Company and transfer that to a business model in order to achieve success."

JUDITH JAMISON, Artistic Director

dedication and leadership have been instrumental in bringing us to this remarkable moment in our history, and will continue to guide us to great accomplishments in the future. Sharon has also helped build the strength and cohesiveness of the Board. On a personal level, I would not be able to do my job as chairman without her. She is a professional in every sense, but has

also become my trusted friend."

AAADT is most fortunate to have Sharon Gersten Luckman. Her vibrant spirit, intellect and perseverance keep AAADT moving forward, accomplishing new goals, day by day, into the future. Congratulations on 10 years—we look forward to many more!

10TH ANNIVERSARY