

## Dance Epic: How Dance can be a Uniting Force for Good by Dance Epic organiser, Charlotte Smith

It was February 2010 and it had only been a month since an earthquake measuring 7.3 on the Richter Scale had devastated the island of Haiti, killing thousands of civilians and leaving millions homeless. Thinking about the amazing work *moving*Voices had already done in welcoming local young people to organise, share and develop their artistic and administrative skills through dance activity, we wanted to reach further afield and help those in need. Bouncing ideas off each other, Katie and myself proposed inviting *moving*Voices volunteers and all members of the community to participate in a sponsored danceathon, which would include workshops and performances by some of Sussex's top dancing talent. Following on from meetings with the Brighton and Hove Youth Dance Committee and South East Dance, Dance Epic was born.

When the day arrived for the danceathon to take place, none of us were to know how the months of planning and organising would work out. Along with Katie, I volunteered to project manage the event. It was my main responsibility to ensure that each volunteer was assigned to a task which enabled them to use their skills and work well together as a team. With a schedule of diverse movement and dance sessions including pilates, bollywood and street dance, people were able to drop in, participate in a style of their choice and show their support for the Earthquake cause. On hand were volunteers from the British Red Cross who worked with *moving*Voices to encourage people to donate and check out the event. We were also treated to a short talk by a member of the British Red Cross, who not only provided us with facts around the earthquake in Haiti but also shared her personal experiences of going out to administer to those who had been directly affected. Whilst it was great to hear what has been achieved so far, there is still so much that needs to be done before the people of Haiti will once again be able to support themselves. It was great to know that Dance Epic would have a small part to play in this recovery process.

Looking back I have been overwhelmed by the level of support that we have received and the opportunities this project has provided in allowing *moving*Voices to network with other organisations. The *moving*Voices volunteers worked well together to ensure that visitors were welcomed, encouraged to take part and donate to the cause. The Komedia, which is an arts and performance venue in the heart of Brighton, allowed us to use their venue and was always there to assist us in any way possible. With the help of a professional film maker and photographer, we were able to record and capture moments from the event, which will serve as a reminder of the incredible work this project has and will continue to do in future.

I was fortunate enough to watch of the workshops and it was an awesome sight to witness. Many of the participants didn't know each other but for this small part of their day, they had united with each other in order to support and bring relief to millions on the other side of the world, they had never met. This opened my eyes to the power dance and how it can bring people together.