



## Self-image affirmed

### SophiaDolls let girls feel good about 'real' bodies

Story and photos by **Barb Sieminski**

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Hey, Fort Wayne: Say "Hello" to a new "Dolly" in town.

The unique idea behind Beverley Danusis' collectible Goddess dolls is to build self-esteem and to empower women and girls.

Most girls have been raised to believe that the "ideal body" is the "Madison Avenue beauty," and this image has been affirmed to them all their lives through the dolls they have played with for generations. SophiaDolls serve as inspiration or affirmation for women and educational playthings for girls.

Danusis created the SophiaDoll concept because real girls and women come in many sizes, facial features, body types and skin tones, and because the Fort Wayne woman believes each woman has her own inner goddess, ready to be awakened and celebrated in her own body.

Two of Danusis' dolls — Mary Magdalene and Demeter — recently won a national contest and will be featured in the May 2008 issue of DOLLS magazine.

Each doll, representing a different facet of Greek mythology, also has a belly — from which all life springs — and is proportionately sized. For example, Demeter, the first doll in the collection, is 16 inches tall with the physical attributes of a woman 5 feet 5 inches tall and a size 14, and a Rubenesque body with full hips, fleshy arms and a small belly, said Danusis, a former 20-year cosmetics CEO and now a motivational speaker, author and an ordained, nondenominational Christian clergywoman.

"Demeter represents the mother pattern of unconditional love and nurturing," she said. "Athena, size 8, is the goddess of intellect, and Persephone, size 6, is the intuitive daughter of Demeter," added Danusis, whose daughter had serious body-image issues because she could not attain the hourglass figure of her favorite doll.

Danusis' dolls — with rooted hair and minute details, such as lines on the palms of their hands — are manufactured in a Chinese factory owned by a Chinese-American man under Danusis' Nea Matia (Greek for "New Sight") company brand because all the U.S. doll manufacturing businesses have

#### Find the dolls

**What:** SophiaDolls by Beverley Danusis are designed to help girls and women develop realistic body images and develop the goddess within themselves.

**Where:** The dolls can be purchased at Clear Waters Serenity Center Shop, 3215 Covington Road, 459-9200; Catalpa Tree Shops, 13405 Main St. in Grabill, 627-3012; or by going to [www.sophiadolls.com](http://www.sophiadolls.com) on the Web.

**Cost:** Each Goddess doll is \$99 (except the Mary Magdalene doll, which retails for \$129) and comes with a starter package of doll, certificate of authenticity, guidebook and costumes. Information: [info@sophiadolls.com](mailto:info@sophiadolls.com); [www.sophiadolls.com](http://www.sophiadolls.com); 423-3655, or 1-800-678-3698.

#### Upcoming appearances

- ◆ On Saturday, Beverly Danusis will be the keynote speaker at the Girl Scouts of Limerlost Council conference, presenting on the subject "Leading from the Heart," followed by her teen leadership workshop, "Leading from the Inside Out."
- ◆ At the annual IPFW/Parkview Women's Health Center- sponsored Tapestry event on April 25, which features keynote speaker Marie Osmond, Danusis will offer the workshop "Awakening Sophia — Living from the Heart."
- ◆ On May 10, Danusis will present a special workshop for women and girls, "Unleashing Your Inner Goddess," at the New Age People Bookstore in Indianapolis.
- ◆ On May 22, she will hold an empowering workshop, "Revealing Your Inner Goddess," at the Van Wert, Ohio, Woman's Club.

gone to China. George Danusis, Beverley's husband, has been trying to arrange for local production of the dolls.

Danusis has been selling the dolls on eBay, and has placed them in stores throughout the nation, including one each in Fort Wayne, Grabbill and Indianapolis, as well as in Sedona, Ariz.; Carlsbad, Calif.; and Greenwich, Conn.

Danusis' local empowerment workshops, body-image seminars and classes have rapidly outgrown the space she was using on Beacon Street, so she and her husband, president of Integrated Financial Services, Gemco and Danusis Agencies, and Gary Woolman, of Woolman Financial Services, formed DWD Corp. and purchased the former Bureau of Motor Vehicles building on Barr Street behind the Barr Street Market. Each partner has his or her own floor, with some offices being leased to tenants.

One of Danusis' goals in creating the collectible dolls was for young girls and their mothers or other women to enjoy the dolls together, for only when a close woman mentor is present can the old stereotypes of the nearly unattainable "ideal" figure be replaced with a new acceptance of realistic body images and "the goddess within." According to Danusis, expanding the definition of beauty will teach women and girls to be at peace with their given bodies.

"If I sell dolls just for the children, attitudes will not change," she said.

For now, she is living her dream, said Danusis, who emulated Sophia, the goddess of wisdom, in her creation of the Greek dolls, and found serendipity and success.

"Though we have had many business setbacks over nine years from concept to finished doll, we persevered," she said. "The important thing is, if you truly believe in your dream, never give up on it. Ever.

"With intention, wisdom and heart, all things are possible!"

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