

SophiaDolls educates, entertains

By Sue Reeves

Young girls have played with dolls for centuries, developing their self-image right along with their imaginations. Then the playthings changed—from soft cloth rag dolls to molded plastic dolls with impossible proportions—and with them changed the way the girls thought about themselves.

“Playing with inappropriate dolls like Barbie or Bratz, getting that image cemented—they don’t know that’s not reality,” said Beverley Denusis, chief creative officer of Fort Wayne doll-maker Nea Matia (Greek for “new eyes” or “new vision”). And that’s what she wants to change with her line of SophiaDolls.

The mission of SophiaDolls, said Denusis, is to educate, inspire and empower all women using the dolls, books and seminars.

“I want to empower young girls to change the world, using the power of play, one girl at a time,” Denusis said.

Dolls have been used as teaching tools for 10,000 years. SophiaDolls use the whimsical and playful theme of the well-known Greek goddesses and their story lessons from ancient Greek mythology to inspire the imagination. The dolls take on the role of teachers through their mythological stories and different body images.

The dolls are not “ideal” beauties, Denusis said. They have different skin tones and body shapes, portraying real women from five to six feet tall and size 4 to 16.

Three dolls —Athena, teacher of personal power and leadership; Persephone, teacher of intuition and life balance; and Demeter, teacher of heart intelligence and motherly love — are in production, while four others are in various stages of development. A book based on the dolls and scheduled for a Christmas release is called “Sophie and the Seven Goddesses: A Journey of Self-Acceptance.”

She set out to manufacture the dolls in the United States, but eventually turned to a facility in China that already produced high-quality dolls for the Robert Tonner company. The dolls are

produced in limited editions of 1,200 and each doll is numbered. The faces are hand-painted, the hair is individually styled and the fully articulated bodies are hand-strung. Upon arrival in the United States, each doll is unwrapped and carefully inspected to ensure quality.

Each doll includes a certificate of authenticity as well as a profile of the goddess whom the doll represents. This profile summarizes her mythological beginnings as well as her characteristics, attributes and the wisdom she offers. Other literature included with the dolls explain how to connect with the attributes of the dolls and how to access the wisdom and power they represent.

A percentage of the sale of each doll goes to the Girl Scouts. Denusis said she chose the Girl Scouts as her charity because statistics show rising suicide rates in the “tween” (ages 9-12) market—and the reported reasons for this increase include breakups with boyfriends and negative body image.

“I want to help young girls shift from a princess paradigm to a goddess paradigm,” Denusis said. Being a princess is about having power over someone else, and using manipulation to get what you want, she said. The goddess paradigm is about recognizing the power within and empowering others.

“The problem in our culture is that we don’t understand the princess archetype,” she said. “It’s so powerful.”

We are simultaneously educating young women to be powerful and independent, she said, but still focusing on how they look. Girls who don’t grow up to be princesses—the ideal beauty—either commit suicide because they just don’t measure up, starve themselves and are miserable, or just give up and become obese.

Denusis spent 20 years in the fashion and cosmetic industry and is intimately familiar with the princess attitude. Because of it, she said, a friend committed suicide, and her daughter—who was 5’4” and a size 4—struggled with body image issues.

Denusis also conducts seminars



Beverley Denusis, chief creative officer of Nea Matia, with two SophiaDolls.

aimed at empowering women. “Awakening Sophia” focuses on living from the heart, while acknowledging the truth, beauty and feminine wisdom that lies within. “Unleash Your Inner Goddess” is a study of seven archetypes, or goddesses, and how to call upon those characteristics to add balance and energy to one’s life. E-mail info@sophiadolls.com for more information.

Monthly mini-seminars, called “GoddesswRap,” are held at the Nea Matia office on Barr Street. Open to women and girls over age 12, these sessions cover a variety of topics related to the goddess archetypes. Pre-registration is not required, and there is no fee. A \$1 donation is requested, which is given to a needy family each Christmas. ☺

Nea Matia, Inc.

Beverley Denusis, chief creative officer
825 S. Barr St., Suite 300
260-432-DOLL (3655)
www.sophiadolls.com
info@sophiadolls.com