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Friends of IMPROVment®,

The Fall semester has been as busy as ever! I just returned from the [First International Meeting of Arts Prescribing and Healthcare](#) in Greece, where our work was received enthusiastically by colleagues from the United States and throughout Europe. This week, I travel to Houston, Texas to the [National Organization for Arts in Health \(NOAH\) Conference](#), where I will share an IMPROVment® workshop with arts and health advocates and practitioners. Meanwhile, our [IGROOVE study](#) and Tuesday [community classes](#) continue.

This month, we wanted to highlight another IMPROVment® partner, Melissa Pihos at Valdosta State. The recent storms were not friendly to that region of southern Georgia, so our thoughts are with Melissa. Please read more about her work below.

Meanwhile in Winston-Salem, our free ongoing community class continues on Tuesdays at 2:30 each week. Come join us at the [Intergenerational Center for Arts and Wellness!](#)

Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chr Soriano".

Christina Soriano
Founder/Executive Director of IMPROVment®
improvement.wfu.edu

Georgia class updates

Community class for this semester is also postponed. Due to continuing weather-related issues, this class is currently on hold.

"Due to the extensive damage caused by Hurricane Helene, I haven't been able to offer my weekly IMPROVment® Zoom class on Wednesday from 4-5 PM since September 27th. Unfortunately, we're still without home internet, but it should be restored this week. I plan to resume the class on October 30th. My in-person IMPROVment® class at The Turner Center for the Arts was only canceled for two weeks due to the storm. I also visit The Canopy at Azalea Grove Assisted Living twice a month, and we only missed one week. Valdosta is still recovering from the hurricane, with a lot of cleanup work ongoing. I'm eager to get back to our Zoom classes! My email is petepihos35@gmail.com if anyone has any questions. Thank you!"

—Melissa

An interview with Melissa Pihos



Tell us about your journey with IMPROVment®

While IMPROVment® was being developed, my dad, Pro Football Hall of Famer Pete Pihos, was battling the late stages of Alzheimer's and front lobar dementia. I longed for him to experience the benefits of this program, but it was too late. His passing in 2011 fueled my determination to make a difference.

In 2020, I reached out to the IMPROVment® team, Christina, Jesse, and Rebecca, about offering training as I was creating a Dance in the Community class at Valdosta State University and saw a perfect opportunity to introduce my students to this beneficial method. Christina, Jesse and Rebecca were guest artists at VSU that semester. They came to our class virtually to help us learn about IMPROVment® and how to teach it. My students and I also took the Introductory IMPROVment® training together, and I was soon invited to train to be certified in IMPROVment®. After a year of training, I was thrilled to start sharing this powerful approach with my community and beyond, both in-person and online. Earning my IMPROVment® certification stemmed from a desire to equip myself with tools to support those facing challenges similar to my father's.

I offer free IMPROVment® classes in Valdosta, Georgia. Every Monday from 5-6 PM, I teach at The Turner Center for the Arts. Additionally, I host classes twice a month at The Canopy at Azalea Grove Assisted Living. For those who cannot make in person classes in Valdosta, I offer a free Zoom class every Wednesday from 4-5 PM. We have a group of individuals who take from all over the US.

What are you working on these days?

In addition to my IMPROVment® classes, I'm also an Associate Professor of Dance at Valdosta State University. I recently collaborated with Dr. Ali Duffy and Dr. Peter Fischer from Texas Tech University on a multidisciplinary dance, music, and film performance titled 'Evolution of Gaia.' We're currently restaging and re-choreographing sections of this work for our students, with plans to perform it in our March 2025 dance concert.

I recently worked with Joey Travolta on a documentary series called 'Lights, Camera, Friendship,' filmed in Valdosta, Georgia. This series follows individuals on the autism spectrum as they learn to build connections. It premiered at the San Diego International Film Festival and will be available for streaming in 2025. This led to me becoming an educator for Joey Travolta's Inclusion Film Camps. In April 2024, I taught a film camp in Little Rock, Arkansas, working with students ages 16-24 on filmmaking, storytelling, scriptwriting, and acting. Together, we created a short film.

I also participated in Travolta's two-week film camp in Vacaville, California, in June 2024. It was an incredible experience, and I'm excited to be involved again next year.

To further enhance my skills, I took a screenwriting course over the summer and am currently working on a feature-length script based on my father's story.

Bollywood Dance Class



**BOLLYWOOD
DANCE CLASS**

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 26 2024
AT 2:30 PM

EVENT DETAILS

Come join us while we experience the rich Indian culture through music and dance.

114 W. 30TH STREET
WINSTON-SALEM, NC 27105

SENIOR SERVICES

Intergenerational Center
for Arts and Wellness
Generations Center

Bollywood Dance Class

Tuesday, November 26

2:30pm

114 West 30th St. Winston-Salem NC 27105

Shivani Vaidya, DO, MS

Headache Fellow, Atrium Health

Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center

Department of Neurology, Comprehensive Headache Program

Come join us while we experience the rich Indian culture through music and dance. All are welcome!

For more information, contact Shivani at s vaidya1224@gmail.com

Soriano to present IMPROVment® workshop at National Organization for Arts in Health (NOAH) Conference



NOAHCON

HOUSTON, TX VIRTUAL DAY

OCT. 23-25, 2024 NOV. 12, 2024

NATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR ARTS IN HEALTH

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