

Thursday, January 18, 2007



Justina Lasley founded the Institute for Dream Studies about a year ago. Students of Lasley's DreamsWork certification program are starting their own dream groups.

Dream weavers

Institute helps people tap into sleep images

BY JILL COLEY
The Post and Courier

Being chased, losing your teeth or going to work without your clothes on – many people have dreams similar to these. Recurring nightmares haunt some, while others claim not to dream at all.

Mount Pleasant resident Justina Lasley believes dreams are a resource to be tapped for personal insight and growth. A year ago, Lasley founded the Institute for Dream Studies, where she leads workshops, offers individual sessions and directs a dream certification program.

In dream work, people share their dreams with a group or in a one-on-one session with a “dream leader.” The goal is not to interpret the dream, but to examine its content and how it may reflect the dreamer’s life. Lasley cringes at the mention of so-called dream dictionaries, where people can look up an object that appeared in a dream to see what it means.

In her dream work, people’s dreams are highly personalized. “Dreams come from within,” Lasley said. “They’re not imposed on the individual by someone else.”

If you go

Justina Lasley will present “Using Your Dreams As Personal Guides” from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Jan. 31 at the Center for Women, 531 Savannah Highway, Charleston. The cost is \$40 for center members and \$50 for nonmembers. Registration is required. For more information, call 763-7333 or visit c4women.org.

Lasley also will offer a retreat in March at Springbank Retreat Center in Kingstree and various workshops throughout the Charleston area. Learn more, visit DreamsWork.us.

In a short time, Lasley’s workload grew immensely. “Everyone is a potential client. Everyone dreams,” she said.

Help is on the way. The eight students in Lasley’s DreamsWork certification program are entering their second and final year. Lasley created the certification program as a way to teach others how to do what she does. The ultimate goal is for the students to use dreams in their own lines of work. As part of the program, students will lead groups of their own, helping others unwrap their dreams, Lasley said.

Working with dreams applies to many fields, she said, including health care, personal growth and child advocacy. The next certification program in Mount Pleasant is scheduled to begin in January 2008. The New York Open Center, a holistic learning center that promotes an integrated approach to health and well-being, recently partnered with Lasley to take her DreamsWork certification to Manhattan in March.

Carrie King of Mount Pleasant sought out Lasley for help with a recurring dream about an intruder in her home. After King realized what the dream meant for her, that a part of her life was out of balance and attacking a part that wanted to thrive, she stopped having the dream, and she examined her life to make it more harmonious.

King was so impressed with her breakthrough that she took Lasley’s certification program and will begin her own dream group in the spring. “My interest lies heavily within the church,” said King, who wants to bring out the spiritual aspect of dreams.

During the first year of the certification program, students participated in group study and independent dream work through reading and writing. Students also attended the International Association for the Study of Dreams conference during the summer in Bridgewater, Mass.

Lasley moved to Mount Pleasant from Atlanta four years ago. Author of

“Honoring the Dream: A Handbook for Dream Group Leaders,” she has a master’s degree in transpersonal psychology, a school of psychology that focuses on the spiritual aspects of life, from the University of W. Georgia.

Before she began working with dream groups 16 years ago, Lasley was an artist. If anyone had told her then that she would move to South Carolina and found a dream institute, she would have said he was crazy, she said. But it makes sense to her now, she said. Art and dreams speak the language of imagery.

Time and again, Lasley encounters the “perfect dream” when a student or client recalls a dream that expresses his issues succinctly and creatively. “Dreams are tailor-made for your life,” she said.

Guiding people to examine their dreams is the goal, she said, not imposing an interpretation. The key is paying attention and being aware, she said. That’s why dream journals play a central role in dream study.

Not only do dreams move individuals along a path of enlightenment, they also serve to bond people together, she said. Lasley has seen a ripple effect in families: When one person changes, an entire household can experience a shift.

In her DreamsWork sessions, the eight students bonded while moving through their dreams, Lasley said.

“Dreams take you to a different level of trust and understanding.”