IMPACT

STORY

CREATING OUTREACH ABOUT ADDICTION SUPPORT TOGETHER (C.O.A.A.S.T.)

In 2017, there were 70,000 drug-related deaths in America; nearly 30,000 of those lives were lost to opioid abuse (World Health Organization). Ana Bess Moyer Bell is no stranger to this crisis. While pursuing her Master’s Degree in Drama Therapy at New York University, several of Moyer Bell’s friends became victims of America’s opioid epidemic. Recognizing the healing potential of the performing arts, Ana Bess conceptualized Creating Outreach About Addiction Support Together (C.O.A.A.S.T.), a social enterprise with a mission to eradicate the opioid epidemic through arts-based educational, therapeutic, and community-driven approaches. Shortly after graduating from NYU in 2016, Moyer Bell made a swift move to Providence to launch the organization.

The SEG Network Effect

New to Providence, Moyer Bell sought coworking and networking connections. While at the theater, she met SEG Board Member and Advisor, Jim Seymour, who suggested that she connect with Social Enterprise Greenhouse (SEG). Fast forward two years and Moyer Bell credits SEG for helping to lay the groundwork for the organization that C.O.A.A.S.T. is today.

Over the last two years, C.O.A.A.S.T. has benefitted from several SEG services including Coworking, Advising, Forum, and the Impact Accelerator, which the organization graduated from in 2017. Moyer Bell continues to gain insights from her Accelerator coach, Elias Spektor, and Jim Seymour. “SEG helped with the nuts and bolts of everything. They gave us a foundation and they continue to give us support.”

Prior to its engagement with SEG, C.O.A.A.S.T. had one employee and no operating budget. Since the Accelerator, their budget has increased to $150,000 and they now reach 5,500 people annually across 30 shows. “We came to SEG with a budget of $0. We built the health of our business here.” Though Moyer Bell remains the sole employee, the organization went from having only six contracted workers in 2016 to 30 in 2018.

C.O.A.A.S.T is supported financially through grants, program proceeds, and contracts such as their recent collaboration with Boston Children’s Hospital to bring the first act of their play, *Four Legs to Stand On*, to congress. They’ve also developed and rolled out an in class curriculum which Moyer Bell has brought to several Rhode Island schools. Looking towards the future, Moyer Bell hopes to expand the organization’s shows through key partnerships, doubling their operating budget, which will allow C.O.A.A.S.T. reach more people affected by the opioid crisis and also employ more people in recovery.