



STYLE SCENE

Changing The World One Step At A Time

Introducing Pluggz, a new line of good for your body shoes

BY CINDY CLARKE

WHEN VENÜ CONNECTED with ultra-entrepreneur Sharon Whiteley to talk about her latest venture, we wanted to walk in her shoes, literally. After all, Sharon is the doyenne of retail marketing, with a prescient eye for the next surefire hit in consumer-driven markets and an ear to the ground, always. This time she is listening to the wisdom whispered in the ages, taking a cue from Mother Nature to give all of us a new footing in health, comfort and style with *pluggz*™.

Not your run-of-the-mill footwear and a name some might not think the most evocative for what is destined to be another breakout fashion brand, *pluggz* is all about shoes that are designed to help you put your best foot forward in terms of well-being and well dressing. Embedded with a proprietary grounding technology that puts the wearer back in touch with the Earth energetically, *pluggz* recreates that barefoot and fancy free feeling we used to feel as kids on an idyllic summer's day, while restoring a natural flow of health-inducing electrons between body and Earth.

Let's face it, as we've grown older, walking around barefoot is just not an option for many of us for several reasons. Safety from sharp objects lying in wait for an unsuspecting ground ambush is one, geography, hygiene and foot comfort are others. Our inherent desire to look as fashionable and in style as possible is another factor, in spite of how our often-aching feet may feel in the process.

Now, thanks to the ingenious and impeccably researched and manufactured line of shoes Sharon Whiteley has fashioned, both young and young-at-heart can reconnect, comfortably, with their former

grounded selves – and walk their way into a better healthy state.

Those are big promises to make in today's consumer-savvy world but Sharon has always been a step ahead in her thinking, with results that are not only right on target, but that are revolutionary and ahead of their time. Earlier in her career she was instrumental in developing a revitalized urban marketplace at the historic Faneuil Hall in Boston when she worked with legendary developer Jim Rouse in the late 1970s. It was tagged for demolition until a committed group of Bostonians sought to preserve it engaging Jim Rouse and his team, a dynamic Sharon Whiteley among them, to put their vision in place. The renovation and the marketing innovations the team introduced with it thoroughly changed the face of downtown Boston. Like all of Sharon's successful ventures, it was the first of its kind, one that spawned imitations in this country and abroad.

She spoke of her work in groundbreaking shopping center development in a self-effacing humble demeanor that belies her contributions to a project of its internationally renowned magnitude. As I prodded, she shared personal recollections of her idea to transform vendor pushcarts indigenous to the area into boutiques on wheels for upscale shopping venues, one of many market-shaping, brilliant innovations that was immediately replicated in shopping centers from coast to coast.

She launched next into stationery and gift manufacturing and created Peacock Papers, a then revolutionary line of motivational, positive but not saccharin sweet, sayings for tongue-tied consumers, etching her witticisms and wisdom on a range of products from soft goods to quick send cards that could be personalized and sent by wannabe authors and philosophers to



their chosen recipients. What set her business apart, aside from reward-inducing sayings like "A great mom is worth her weight in chocolate chip cookies," and one of her favorites, "If you follow the flock, you could end up a lamb chop," was the market research aspect of her business wherein she opened a test "retail store" to accurately ascertain what sells, what's hot and what's not and at the same time show her clients, buyers all, how to effectively display Peacock goods in their retail

establishments. Like the shopping center developers who banked on the success of location, location, location, she has thrived on getting closer to the customer with innovation, innovation, innovation.

Each venture she founded ignited another new entrepreneurial adventure including co-authoring a book for women in business, *The Old Girls' Network: Insider Advice for Women Building Businesses in a Man's World*, founding Eight Wings enterprise with a team of angel investors to help women realize their own potential to recently creating a pampering, "grounding" signature *PluggzSPA* pedicure for Canyon Ranch Clubs on Celebrity Cruises and the elegant Queen Mary that sought to do what all the life-enhancing products she creates do so well: change lives for the better.

After building, from the ground up, five successful market driven companies, serving as the Chair of the National Center on Women & Aging at Brandeis University, receiving numerous awards for her business acumen, including Ernst & Young's regional Entrepreneur of the Year Award and other organizational affiliations eager to tap into her expertise, she is more intent than ever on delivering beneficial products that speak to the needs of and empower today's "more health-conscious and informed customers."

To that end, in 2011 she founded LiSTEN Brands, dedicated to the manufacture, marketing and distribution of innovative products that promote health, vitality and enhance overall wellbeing. Her flagship product, *pluggz footwear* - fashion forward, lifestyle shoes for women, and recently a men's addition, are the first to step out into the marketplace as they step back in time to those oft-longed for barefoot days and deliver physiological benefits to the wearer.

Inspired thinking is an indelible part of Sharon's persona. Her latest idea for *pluggz* came about on the heels of a health and wellness conference she attended to gain fresh insights and an up-to-date perspective on healthy living from acclaimed experts and health professionals where she was fascinated by the correlation between compromised health and modern man's separation from nature. Extensive scientific findings documented by pioneers like Clint Ober, Dr. Stephen Sinatra and Martin Zucker, authors of *Earthing: The Most Important Health Discovery Ever!* and James

A portion of the sales proceeds from each pair of *pluggz* sold goes towards supporting inspiring organizations dedicated to improving the health and wellness for people of all ages. For more information, visit www.pluggz.com

Oschman, PhD, a leading edge and highly respected biophysicist who stated, "Grounding and Earthing is as important for our health as sunshine and good nutrition" and added in a documentary film *GROUNDED*, "it is as important as the discovery of penicillin," point unequivocally to the positive health benefits of being more closely connected to the grounding properties of the Earth. Sharon concurs, saying that Grounding, also called Earthing, is one of the most amazing health re-discoveries of our time and she is determined to share these feel better findings through *pluggz*.

There is a great deal of substantiating research behind the beneficial effects of grounding and earthing and the natural energy in the form of electrons they deliver back to us. Many studies show that becoming more electrons nourished helps to neutralize the harmful free radicals found in modern-day bodies and aids in healing from the inside out. Reduction of inflammation, a culprit causing many conditions and now even associated with some chronic diseases is a major benefit documented. All we need to do is reconnect with the Earth. "This is what *pluggz* enables you to do when you walk directly on the ground – grass, sand, soil and even concrete city sidewalks. As importantly, fashionably and comfortably so," Sharon added. "Most shoes today that boast a comfort feature are athletic-looking, frumpy or downright dowdy -- and most shoes today insulate us from this vital connection".

She explained the technology simply - that all *pluggz* shoes contain soft black conductive plugs made from a carefully engineered, custom-formulated carbon and rubber compound that are crafted in to the shoe's insoles under the weight bearing part of the foot, the metatarsal area, enabling the flow of the Earth's electrons into your body with each step.

"This flow of this revitalizing energy through your feet naturally gives your body what it needs to return to a more normalized body state," Sharon told me.

To feel what she was talking about and get on board with all the buzz about *pluggz*, I ordered a very cute, always in style pair of black patent leather wedges. As I first put them on, I thought about how I was going to feel more energized, balanced and calmer, how these shoes might banish the fatigue and the nagging aches and pains that have become part of my everyday life over the years. And that I might reclaim that youthful barefoot bounce in my step as I stepped out in my new *pluggz*. I do know that the cuteness factor was already making me feel like I might possibly turn heads as I walked down the street.

But I think what is going to make the most lasting impression on me is the fact that I am following in the footsteps of a lady who continues to change the world for the better and then better still. □