

Congratulations to All Our 2019 Winners

Rhythm Works Scholarship

Lisa Sabath – Dynamic Edge Dance Center....Fenton MO

Participated December 7 2019 Chicago Bulls Pregame Show



Wingman Scholarship Winner

Barbara Ellender – ABC Dance Arts Academy....Houston TX

Participated March 15 2019 Houston Rockets Pregame Show



2019 Poster Contest Winners



Anaxeli Davila_13_Truman Middle School_Grand Praire TX



Baheen Asari_14_Truman Middle School_Grand Praire TX

2019 Essay Winner

Lauren Kee_12_Emma Tse Elite Dance Academy_Wan Chai Hong Kong

What will you dance for? Inclusion or Kindness or Community or all of the above?

By Lauren Kee

I still vividly remember the day when I burst into tears, wanting to kick dance out of my life in favor of some much-needed relief. I was only seven, and as a young dancer, I couldn't seem to find a way to balance the pressure of dance and school life. Looking back, I am grateful to all my friends and family for convincing me to continue with dance. When I dance, not only do I dance for my own enjoyment, but I dance for others too. I dance for my friends and family who have helped shape me to become the dancer I am today.

A few years ago, I started training in contemporary dance in addition to ballet. I didn't have much exposure to contemporary and was slightly uneasy during my first class. I had trouble with the choreography, particularly the leaps and turns. Amidst my struggles, a few of my classmates kindly offered to coach me on the steps after class. After experiencing first-hand how it feels to be included in dance, I dance for inclusion.

Just recently, my classmate in ballet was having trouble with fouettés in class and was being teased by the other students for her lack of ability. Recalling how my friends helped me, I stood up for her and assisted her with progression techniques. I've also been fortunate enough to be able to "pay it forward" by dancing at a charity gala that raises money for underprivileged children last fall. Through these experiences and countless others before and after, I passed on the same kindness that others had given to me; thus, I dance for kindness.

Dance is an international language, and it is internationally "understood" whether it be traditional Chinese lion dance or the explosive Cuban salsa. I believe that dance is for everyone, no matter the age, size, gender or race. This became clearer to me last year when I walked into dance camp not knowing anyone, and came out five weeks later prancing around with my new-found friends. Throughout the camp, I forged international friendships with Coco and Mao from Tokyo as well as Lili from Cologne, Germany. Despite the differences in our mother tongues, we managed to bond over the fact that we were all passionate dancers. From all the well-cherished memories created through dance with my friends from all over the world, I dance for community.

Dance does not discriminate; rather, it brings global communities together. I dance for the thousands of people who have paved the path for me, and the people who will come after me that I hope to inspire. Because of this, I will always dance for inclusion, kindness and community.

Rikki Jones_Canton Ohio_22yrs

Why is dance so important to me?

By

Rikki Jones

This sounds like a simple statement, however in order for me to explain why I love to dance I need to take you back to the beginning of my personal story. It all started when I was thirteen years old. I told my mother that I wanted to practice ballet; however my mother felt that I was too old to start a complicated dance like ballet. My mind was set I wanted to dance and nothing was going to stop my dream. At the age of four I was diagnosed with autism. Autism has been described as having a developmental disorder that causes difficulties in social interactions and communication and having repetitive thoughts or behavior. For me that just means when I get a thought in my head it just stays there until I can act on it. The desire to dance was in my head and driving me to find a way to make my dream come true.

Dancing for me can be a way to express myself without words, because sometimes when I speak my words and thoughts are not always understood by other people. Dancing allows me to use music and movements to speak for me. I can communicate without words and say something that is clearly understood. It takes me to another place where I can be free, everything is happy. Everything is alright. It gives me joy in my heart and I can share my gift that God gave to me.

Why is dance important to me? That's easy, for me it's because I'm not someone with a disability I'm someone who just loves to dance and share my gift with the world. Dancing takes me to a happy place. When you see me dance know that I'm happy.