

December Studio of the Month: The Dance Centre

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This month we spoke with Michi Barber, co-owner of The Dance Center in Decatur, IL. We chose to feature the Dance Centre as our December Studio of the Month because of the things they do to give back to their community. Most specifically, “’Twas the Night Before Christmas”, the holiday show they have every year to benefit the Decatur Salvation Army’s Angel Tree program, which buys toys for underprivileged children.

Tell us a little about yourself and the Dance Centre.

I have been teaching dance for over 30 years. My business partner, Leslie, has been dancing with me since she was two years old. We had both been teaching in the community and about seven years ago we decided to start our own studio. We made the decision because we wanted to bring things to the community that we weren’t able to bring as dance teachers, including a charitable event.

In 2005, our studio started out with one room and we have now added a second. We’re there dancing every day between 5 and 10 p.m. and we have about 450 to 460 dancers!

What inspired you to start an annual charity dance event?

Leslie and I were at a dance conference and we were talking to some other studio owners who had successfully started a charity event. Confident we could make it work, we started our “’Twas the Night Before Christmas” show four years ago to benefit the Salvation Army Angel Tree program.

Tell us about “’Twas the Night Before Christmas”.



The show is made up of some old Christmas songs and some new. We fit the names of the songs into the story, which is narrated by Santa Claus. We have two, hour-long shows, and each class does a minute long number at each show. The parents give donations of \$10 to cover the cost of the t-shirts our students wear at the event, and attendees to the show purchase tickets at the door and give donations. All profits we get go to the Salvation Army Angel Tree program in Decatur, IL.

How successful has the event been?

Over the past three years we’ve raised over \$6,000 for the Salvation Army. This year we raised \$1,800 for the kids – it was a great show!

What have you learned from doing an event like this that might inspire other studios to do the same?

We teach dance in a small community, so most of our students are recreational dancers. We're not near a big city or getting them ready to be professional dancers – we just have excellent students who love dancing and are good at it. In our hearts, we are not only teaching the kids about dance, but about life. We influence the kids to do their best and always put forth their best effort. We teach them that if you work hard you get rewarded.

We started this charitable event because we know that everyone in their heart would like to help others, but they don't really know how to get started. We have learned that doing it through the studio gives everyone here an opportunity to help out in our community. There is nothing like the feeling of helping other people, and through this show, the students are getting to learn that at a young age. Last year, one of our girls came off the stage and said to me, "This is the best day of my whole life!" And that really is what it's all about.

Read more about their show: [Dance benefit helps out Salvation Army Angel Tree program](#) From the Herald & Review, their local newspaper.