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## Twenty year dance legacy steps into new stage

A 20 year dance legacy in Milton will be taking a step in a new direction with the opening of a new school this fall. The Audrey Meredith Dance Centre, which has been a permanent fixture in Milton since 1976 will become the Milton Centre for Music and Theatre Arts and move their studio to a new location at Derry Road and highway 25 according to part owner Kim Jesch. Daughter of original owner Audrey Meredith, an examiner for the Canadian Dance Teacher's Association, Jesch and Marnie Palmer, who progressed from young student to teacher since the school first opened, are the co-owners.

Having been in the community for so long, the dance centre has evolved into a close knit family. Jesch says a significant portion of their students have been around for 10 years or more. "We have a lot of students who have been around for years who have grown up with us," says Jesch. "Our students have a lot of confidence in us. Even when they go off to university they come back to us."

According to Jesch the school stays active in the Milton community by dancing at celebratory events and for hospital and nursing home patients.

"Dance teaches children poise and self confidence even if they never become a professional," Jesch says of the benefits of dance. She adds, "You can always pick a dancer out of a crowd."



The centre promotes each individual's goals offering classes that cater to those in search of fitness and fun as well as the calibre of training required to pursue a career as a professional dancer.

The school's recent success at the first Canadian national dance competition held in Waterloo where nine students placed in the top three attests to their competitiveness. Jesch reports that six past students have made it into Kent State University in Ohio which has the only university program for teachers of dance in the U.S.

The school is branching out into all aspects of the performing arts to prepare their students for opportunities in the booming theatre market in nearby Toronto, hence the new name. Jesch says professional careers aren't just about dance any more. The school offers classes in tap, jazz, ballet, point, competitive and acrobatic dance, plus lyrical and musical theatre instruction.

Jesch estimates Milton's two decade old dance legacy will continue with renewed energy for a long time to come.

"We want to keep the relationship going," she says. "This isn't just a business."

*Classes run from September to May. Children as young as three can enroll. Registration takes place at the dance centre's office which is, and will remain at the same location as Balloon Impressions, 190 Main Street E., Downtown Milton.*

—Allison Hanes, Promotions Coordinator for the Milton DBIA.

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