

Michele is inspiration behind DanceCentre

By KATE GILDERDALE
The popularity of Stouffville's DanceCentre is sometimes overlooked when the topic of young people's activities comes up.

Perhaps the lack of scoreboards and standings fail to keep it in the public eye on a regular basis.
But when May rolls around, and with it the Dance Recital at Stouffville District Secondary School, it's obvious this is one of Stouffville's most successful enterprises.

With 260 girls and boys registered for 1987-'88, there's no doubt that dance can easily hold its own with other activities available to young people in town.

Dancing has been a way of life for director Michele Green since she went to her first ballet class at age six.

Taught 100 kids
"By the time I was 15," she said, "I had my own studio 120 miles from Saskatoon, where I was born and brought up. I would commute there every weekend after school to teach about 100 children from small rural areas and then return to Saskatoon for

another week at school."
By the time Michele finished high school, she had passed all her R.A.D. exams. From there she joined Canada's Contemporary Dancers in Winnipeg and won a scholarship to the Royal Winnipeg Ballet for the summer.

Michele met her future husband Jim when he auditioned for Canada's Contemporary Dancers in 1971. "We both danced with Winnipeg for two years, then were married and went to Saskatoon, where we operated the Saskatchewan Dance Theatre."

The Dance Theatre, a non-profit organization, received grants from the Department of Education. The Greens ran workshops and lecture demonstrations as well as performing.

Moved to Toronto
It became clear to them that the future lay in a major centre like Toronto.

At that time young dancers seeking to join new companies had to apply for grants in writing. "There had been no audition process up until then, and you would get turned down even though no one had seen you perform," explained Michele.

When the process started, she was one of the first native Canadians to receive a grant by audition. "We went to Vancouver, then Winnipeg, and each time I received a grant."

They moved to Toronto in 1976 and Michele accepted a scholarship with Toronto Dance Theatre. At this stage, her husband had changed career direction, and after some time with the company, Michele felt she, too, was ready for a new challenge.

Barbara McDougall's aid
"I decided on a complete change and spent two years working for an investment company on Bay Street as personal secretary to Barbara McDougall (now Minister of Employment and Immigration for the federal government.)"

With her background in operating her own company, she was amply qualified for the position and took a two-year break from dance.

"It was great, but the novelty wore off and I knew I had to get back where I really belonged," she explained.

In 1978, Jim and Michele moved to Stouffville. In October Stephanie was born and less than two years later Joel arrived.

Taught fitness
When Joel was a year old, Michele started teaching fitness at SDSS. As a trained instructor (she had taught fitness classes in her own studio) she discovered a big demand in the area.

"It was just when dance class started and they had nobody, so I applied. Hundreds of people signed up, and I really started to get it back together after my two-year absence."
When she investigated preschool programs at the library for her children, it occurred to her that it would be logical to add a dance class to the activities, and the library willingly accommodated her. Once this program was under way, she felt a commitment to the students to allow them to continue dancing.

In 1983, she rented the basement at Christ Church Anglican for her regular classes, while continuing pre-school sessions at the library. By then, she felt ready to accept the challenge of providing a full-time program.

First, however, she had to find a permanent location, and in January 1984, after months of hard work and considerable investment, The DanceCentre opened its present studio on Main Street West. Today, it's a successful venture.

Found a home
With a full range of ballet, jazz and tap classes and three adult fitness classes weekly, plus ballet and tap exams and the annual recital, life for Michele (not to mention her family) is something of a whirl between September and the end of May. She acknowledges that her husband's help and support have been invaluable.

"He understands when I have to spend long hours in the studio, choreographing dances and working on the music." He also operates the backstage and technical tasks for the recital, as well as carrying out maintenance work on the studio.

Immense satisfaction
"He loves watching the kids dance, and he knows when they're good."

Although, as in any career, there can sometimes be frustrations, Michele finds immense satisfaction in her work.
"Sometimes it seems as if a dance will never come together, but somehow it does in the end and all the effort is worthwhile."
"Occasionally I wonder if I am too tough on the kids, but dance is a demanding discipline and needs a lot of effort and concentration."

Objective criticism
Judging by the enthusiasm and dedication shown by the students and their continued participation, it seems the mix is just right. Criticism is objective and helps the class to keep improving.

The final proof is in the recital, which will be held this year May 26 and 27 at SDSS. It provides excellent entertainment for family, friends and anyone who enjoys dance.

For Michele, it's the culmination of months of effort and hard work, giving her and the students a chance to show how far they've come together. Michele Green and The DanceCentre have added a welcome dimension to Stouffville, one that seems destined to stay and grow with the town.

Fourth Line news

Upcoming bridal shower

By MARJORIE WOODLAND
A bridal shower will be held Thursday, April 14 for Pat May and Bob Chandler in the Goodwood Community Centre. Friends and relatives are invited as this young couple is feted in honor of their May wedding.

Blanche Taylor is continuing to improve following her operation. She has been home from hospital for a week.

Bruce Taylor of Port Perry is recovering from surgery in the Oshawa Hospital and is expected to be home soon.

After a lengthy illness, Sheila Smith is expected home shortly. After tests and surgery it is hoped better health will be in store for her.

Experiencing a sudden and severe attack of arthritis in January, Gordon Wilson is slowly improving under therapy. He hopes to be able to help with the spring work on the farm in due time.

The Christian Women's Club invites the ladies of the area to a morning coffee on April 8 at 9:30 a.m. in the Goodwood Community Centre. The theme "That Added Touch" will be presented by Freda Agar from Venture Decorating Services in Unionville. The melodic touch will be rendered on accordion and guitar by Ken and Anna Clark of Pickering. Ruth MacLain of Elora will provide the

finishing touch with an inspiring devotional message.

The first week in April has been designated as National Laugh Week by our neighbors south of the border. It has been suggested laugh therapy practised faithfully is beneficial not only to one's mental health, but to physical health

in that food will digest better. The sunshine of your own smile will cheer you while others will be pleasantly stimulated also.

Do keep Thursday April 21 free. It is the day of the United Church Women's maple syrup supper at the Goodwood Community Centre.

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