



Members of Dance Expressions' competitive dance teams pose together at the studio's grand opening. These girls recently attended an AmeriDance summer camp, where the group was recognized as having the overall best technique.

MIRROR PHOTO BY LAUREN C. OSTBERG



Brittany Patterson (left) and Elaine Nickoli are co-owners of Dance Expressions, and both claim that their warm mother-daughter relationship translates to an efficient and effective business partnership.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ELAINE NICKOLI

Family-Owned Dance Expressions Steps Up To The Barre

BY LAUREN C. OSTBERG
MIRROR REPORTER

In a move that trumps other stage moms' contributions, Elaine Nickoli became heavily invested in her daughter's dream of owning a dance studio.

Now co-owners of the newly opened Dance Expressions studio, Nickoli and her daughter, Brittany Patterson, hope to offer area dancers "a bright new environment and new approaches."

Patterson, 28, gives credit where credit is due.

"It's both of our dreams, but she's making it happen," she said.

Nickoli was flirting with the idea of leasing a property on Illinois Avenue two years ago.

"I just kept thinking it would be a great location. I guess I never really got that idea out of my head," she

said, smiling at her surroundings.

She was reluctant to take on such a large project when her daughter's husband, Chris, would not be around to lend a hand.

Chris, however, agreed that it was too good an opportunity to pass up, and spent the better part of his one-week holiday going over specs with suppliers and discussing construction work.

Currently serving in Iraq, he regularly communicates with Brittany and Elaine by Web cam, and has been very supportive of the studio.

Nickoli leased a space on the corner of Illinois and Kingsbury as soon as the development opened up in May of this year.

The Dance Expressions studio is brand new and tailored specifically to their needs.

To start, there's a whopping 1,700 square feet of

studio space.

"Rent's a little high, but I wanted to be sure we would never outgrow this place," Nickoli said. "I said, 'Why don't we just go for it from the beginning?'"

The studio's floating wood floor, perched atop a layer of cushioning, provides a comfortable dance surface.

The space includes a reception area, two dressing rooms, a bathroom and a back room that Nickoli will use for photography.

"There will also be a study area back here, for kids who have a break between lessons," Nickoli said.

"It's beautiful — very professional-looking," exclaimed Betsy Barone, the mother of three dancers, when she stopped by the studio for a peek.

Morrin Construction built the facility, and Nickoli "can't say enough good things," about the staff's helpfulness and efficiency.

The entire building was constructed in less than 90 days, and Morrin paid attention to details.

For example, dance teams use car washes as a fund-raiser. Morrin installed a spigot so the team can host the fund-raiser on-site.

"It's in my best interests to give (clients) as much guidance as possible," Jeff Morrin said. "I've brought my crew size down so that each of them can be more specialized and have a personal knowledge of the project."

As the first business owner on the complex, Nickoli had first dibs on the size of her space. The facility will not grow, but Nickoli does not doubt the dance programs will.

Dance Expressions offers lessons in tap, jazz, lyrical, ballet, pointe and hip-hop.

Patterson, who holds a degree in early childhood education and has 10 years' experience as a dance instructor, will also teach a "pre-dance" class to potty-trained children and coach two competitive dance teams. Next

year, Dance Expressions will add an elementary-age dance team as well.

The studio is in the process of surveying parents to determine whether a dance class for adults would be well attended.

Nickoli and Patterson are very receptive to client feedback.

"We feel that we — the studio, the instructors, the classes — should be evaluated once a year, just to be sure we're doing things

right," Nickoli said.

Recently, she took a client's suggestion and made a bench slightly shorter to accommodate the legs of the studio's youngest patrons.

Patterson's staff will travel to receive additional technique training as necessary, and Patterson will attend seminars to sharpen her performance as a first-time director.

"I've been a performer all my life, and I never thought I'd be able to stop," Patterson

said. She hasn't performed for over a year, due to her pregnancy and the birth of her son, Landen seven months ago.

"But it's been even better to teach full-time," Patterson beamed. And then she scampered off, because a roomful of young dancers was waiting for Miss Brittany to make an entrance.

Dance Expressions is located at 406 Illinois Ave. in Maumee. Call (419) 893-6000 to register for classes.



Jillian Harrison (back) and Brittany Greenwood perform a sassy dance at the grand opening of Dance Expressions. Brittany Patterson, the studio's owner, calls both dance instructors "phenomenal."

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