

June 2010



IN LOVING MEMORY OF MICHELLE PARMA - 1975-2002

Dear Friends and supporters of Dance to Live! I wanted to take a moment to update you on the progress of Dance to Live!

We are now in our third year of providing dance therapy/adaptive movement services to children in the Dallas metroplex. Dance to Live! served over 100 children last year. Dance to Live! uses adaptive movement therapy developed specifically for children with emotional, physical and learning challenges. The therapy we provide facilitates pride in achievements, the knowledge that one can exceed expectations, balance, co-operation, confidence and poise, effective breathing and calming exercises

Our newest program begins at the Family Place Safe House, a shelter for abused women and children. We start our classes in June 2010 and will continue as part of the curriculum when the Safe House opens a campus school for their children in the fall of 2010. Dance to Live! classes are conducted weekly for the balance of the school year.

In October of 2008, Dance to Live! began with an after school Yoga Ed program at Skyview Elementary. We are proud to report that we recently graduated our second class of 6th graders, who had been a part of our weekly program for 2 years. The maturation and improvement in self-expression skills demonstrated by these children were astounding as observed in their final program. They stood straight and proud, heads held high, voices steady as they each addressed the audience, performed complex Yoga moves and a choreographed program with poise and grace.

Additionally, we have been serving the children of Jonathan's Place, a safe, secure shelter for children who have been removed forcibly from their homes. We can only begin to imagine the fear and insecurity they feel when separated from their parents and are introduced to this new environment. Dance to Live! uses Yoga Ed to teach the children calming breathing exercises, new words, colors, and how to follow instructions. The staff follows up with a daily program of breathing and calming exercises. This is a practical technique the children can use for the rest of their lives.

At Scottish Rite Hospital Dance to Live! takes on the challenge of providing movement therapy to children in wheel chairs or who must use walkers; children with shortened or amputated limbs, spinal defects or autism. Such special circumstances fuel our creativity and provide rewards in more than equal measure. These children seem exceptionally grateful to be called dancers and work hard to prove they can be graceful, talented, gracious and move with enthusiasm and joy. It is particularly fulfilling to see how their parents and grandparents surround them with pride and love. It is not rare to see tear-filled eyes among our audience. Be sure to go to the website www.DanceToLive.org and select "Our Mission" to check out the "Photo Gallery" for a show of our beautiful participants at Scottish Rite Hospital.

Genesis Women's shelter is a secure location where women and children are housed and cared for when they leave abusive situations. For safety, the children are educated on site, and we provide weekly services in their classrooms. The needs of these children extend far beyond what we provide, but we have had children not want to leave the shelter for their transitional housing because they didn't want to give up their Yoga and dance classes. Dance to Live! has taught dances from around the world (with appropriate props!!) to supplement the classroom cultural history classes. As we facilitate the children's experience of the healing qualities of music and movement, other lessons are incorporated such as respect for self and others, cooperation, self control, peace and acceptance of oneself.

Nexus Recovery Center has received our services weekly for two years. It is a residential treatment center for female adolescents and children recovering from drug addiction. We work with adolescents and children in separate classes to inspire health, self esteem and confidence through different types of movement. It is extremely rewarding to us when the class of adolescents asked that we bring a tape measure to class because they wanted to measure

their bodies and work toward a better body image. This request enabled us to realize that they were beginning to visualize themselves in the future and they wanted to be able to present themselves in the best possible way. What an inspiration!

Ronald McDonald House, which was added to the Dance to Live! schedule in 2009-2010, is a delightful place to provide movement therapy. Sometimes even the parents join our classes, as they certainly struggle with the stress of dealing with their children's illnesses. Depending on where children are in their treatment schedules, some participate with great energy and joy after spending a day at the doctor's office/hospital and others may participate from a chair, too weak to stand and exercise – but they are just as enthusiastic to be involved in the group. As they all dance, giggle and smile along with their friends and families, we are proud to say that Dance to Live! is able to offer them a small respite from the challenges in their lives.

We thank you for the time it took to read this catch-up letter from Dance to Live! We are privileged to serve the community in Michelle's memory and immensely grateful for your support. Without you we never could have positively impacted so many children's lives. Your continued support ensures that Dance to Live! is able to serve many more children in the future.

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