

# dance comes *alive* for PE students



STORY BY DANA E. NEUTS  
PHOTOS BY JAMES BAVENDAM



Dance Alive enriched more than 500 students at Bryn Mawr Elementary last fall.



**P**lié, pirouette, arabesque, ballet positions, ballerina shoes, physiology and history.

Those are just a few of the things Renton's Bryn Mawr Elementary School students learned about the art of ballet during physical education class this fall. In addition to the vocabulary lesson, students also learned about stretching, leaping, turning, bending and balance and had the opportunity to try different ballet positions.

Devin Daniels, 9 years old and a fourth grader, says he enjoyed the unit, but it was different than he expected.

"Balance comes from your stomach. I thought it came from your legs," he explains. "It was good. It was fun."

The three-day ballet program, called Dance Alive, was brought to the school free of charge by ballet mistress Andi Bryndza of the Evergreen City Ballet to expose local students to fine arts. Now in its second year, the program has served more than 1,200 students in the South King County area. The program is expected to double its reach this year.

"We want kids to get really excited about the art form," Bryndza says.

PE and reading teacher Nina Williams heard about Dance Alive from a teacher at Benson Hill

You can find more information about Dance Alive or Evergreen City Ballet online at [www.evergreencityballet.org](http://www.evergreencityballet.org), call 425-228-6800, or visit their new studios and black box theater at 2230 Lind Ave. SW, Renton.

Elementary. She invited Evergreen City Ballet to put the program on at Bryn Mawr this fall, reaching more than 500 students in three days.

"This is great for our kids. We have such a diverse population, and a lot of these kids live in poverty," Williams says. "We are exposing them to something new that they would never have experienced otherwise."

Williams says her students were attentive and receptive during the ballet unit. The kids enjoyed learning from Bryndza, who described ballet in terms the students could relate to, as in Spiderman, basketball and video games. The students' enjoyment was easy to see as they leapt, twirled and danced across the gym floor, giggling, laughing and smiling.

Fourth grader Reanna Wong, 9, says she really liked the unit and admitted she hadn't known anything about ballet prior to the PE class. Her favorite part was leaping.

"It was really awesome!" Wong says.

At the end of the PE unit, students were given

information about the ballet company to take home along with a coupon for a free lesson. They were also invited to Evergreen City Ballet to see upcoming performances such as "The Nutcracker" (December), "Peter and the Wolf" (February 2010) and "Sleeping Beauty" (March 2010), which feature children their own age.

Artistic director Kevin Kaiser of Evergreen City Ballet was instrumental in the creation of Dance Alive in the fall of 2008.

"After a long career in the arts, I wanted to give back to children," he explains.

He selected Bryndza for the instructor's role because she works well with children.

"Andi is an amazing teacher with little kids," he says.

Kaiser and Bryndza say they hope the program continues to grow, so local children can learn more about ballet and other fine arts.

"Now that word is getting out, more schools are receptive to the program," Bryndza says. "The potential for this project is huge!"