

Discovering the Dancer Within

Ballet Tennessee programs inspire youth to learn about dance and about themselves

Jawahn White attended the free Ailey II master class sponsored by Ballet Tennessee and Chattanooga Parks and Recreation last April.

He started the class near the back of the Brainerd Recreation Center gymnasium, behind 150 other children.

His enthusiasm and desire to dance motivated him to navigate the crowds until he worked himself to the front of the class where he caught the eye of Ballet Tennessee Executive Director Barry VanCura and Kim Battle of the Parks and Recreation Department.

They encouraged him to audition for Dance Alive. He auditioned and was selected to participate in the two week summer program along with 20 boys and 50 girls.

He attended the full two weeks, learned the basics of tap and contemporary ballet, and performed onstage at the UTC Fine Arts Center.

The faculty was very impressed with Jawahn's motivation. He received a Talent Identification Program Scholarship from Ballet Tennessee. This program directly impacts low income youth by providing year round professional dance education and mentorship.

Sidebar:

Ailey II returns to Chattanooga November 13-15, 2008

One of the country's most popular dance companies, The Ailey name has been synonymous with American modern dance since 1958, when Alvin Ailey and a group of young African-American dancers presented a now fabled performance in New York City. This year marks the 50th Anniversary of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater.

Today, Ailey II carries on the tradition by performing to sold-out houses and amazing audiences with their unique artistry, strength, and passion.

Thursday, November 13: Ballet Tennessee and Chattanooga Parks and Recreation will host a series of master classes taught by the world-traveled Ailey II dancers and its associate artistic director Troy Powell. Three recreation centers will host free master classes for Chattanooga youth with no dance experience required. The Patten Center, home of Ballet Tennessee, will host two additional master classes for intermediate and advanced level dancers.

Friday, November 14, Ailey II will be the guest of honor at Ballet Tennessee's fundraiser gala.

Saturday, November 15, Ailey II will perform at the Tivoli Theater, 8:00 PM.