

Dance champs aim to bring benefits of movement to community



World champion ballroom dancers are keen to spark the love of dance in local youngsters with the opening of T&S Dance Club.

The vision of Thomas Zinger, 21, and Sarah Stolarski, 19, T&S Dance Club operates two days a week out of the Addison Hall Dance Studio within the Aurora Town Square complex.

With two world championships and 19 Canadian championships under their belts, they aim to 'inspire the next generation of ballroom dancers' and help build their confidence, coordination, and sense of teamwork.

T&S Dance Club held a soft launch at Aurora Town Square (ATS) but formally celebrated their opening this month.

'We're from Vaughan and the whole idea of coming to Aurora was to give kids the opportunity to have ballroom dancing in the community because a lot of times parents have to drive all the way to Vaughan or Toronto,' says Zinger.

Adds Stolarski: 'We're really trying build the new generation of dancers, which obviously starts from kids. We're trying to get more kids involved because, on the one hand, it's very beneficial for kids to do this sport at a young age because we build a lot of coordination skills and social skills from a young age. On the other hand, we're building them from zero, starting young, and into the future as they dance.'

Considering ballroom dance as a sport is 'controversial,' they joke, they say they believe it is both a sport and an art 'because you can't have one without the other.'

As Stolarski grew up she was first bitten by the sports bug, but soon fell in love with dance. Zinger's brother used to dance and, as a kid, picked up an interest 'and maybe a few pointers' watching his brother and his classmates go through their routines.

What sets ballroom apart, they agree, is teamwork and partnership.

'You have a team and it's just the two of you' it really develops different social skills and coordination 'physical coordination that you're not really introduced to in other forms of dance. It's very special and unique,' says Zinger.

Some people might find the idea of taking up ballroom dancing intimidating, they say, but Zinger says, it all starts with a good foundation.

'We're trying to give them a sense of what it (ballroom dancing), is,' he continues. 'Parents tell us the kids are dancing in the kitchen and practicing at home and that is so rewarding because we put 100,000 per cent into what we do and when we get such feedback we really feel we're making a difference in their lives.'

In addition to dance, the T&S Dance Club offers a more well-rounded experience for participant families by nature of being based out of Aurora Town Square.

?We saw ATS was just about to open and the great thing about it is it is a Cultural Centre as opposed to a community centre,? says Zinger. ?There is a theatre, a library, arts, a museum, history and the most important thing that attracted us here was the fact they opened a dance studio in the building. That really is kind of a step in the right direction to introduce the kids to art and dance.

?It's right at the centre, a lot of kids come to the Library, and there are always a lot of people buzzing around here. We thought it would be a great place because some of the kids we have, they have younger siblings. While we're working with toddlers, the older kids can be doing something in the library, or families can go to the park ? it is really convenient because there are so many things to do in that one place. It's a really family-oriented location and we think it is super-ideal for what we want to do.?

Eventually what they want to do is expand programming for older age groups ? from teens to grandparents ? and underscore the importance ballroom dancing can have in overall development by introducing it to the schoolboards in a more fulsome way.

?We're trying to help give them a sense of understanding of what it is. We have such a positive outreach and a positive response to what we have been doing, that's why we decided to continue growing in Aurora, especially as there are so many new kids and new families. We feel it is a wonderful thing to bring to the community.?

For more information about T&S Dance Club, visit tsdanceclub.ca.

By Brock Weir