

# Center Stage Dance Academy steps into the limelight

By **ROBERTA LONG**

Village Life correspondent

National Dance Week is April 26-30 and this year there is a lot to celebrate at Center Stage Dance Academy of El Dorado Hills.

Georgina Coleman, owner and leading spirit, said the academy was “built for the community by the community.” And the community obviously loves it as readers of Village life named Center Stage “Best Dance Studio.”

In 2007, when it looked like she was going to have to close her academy and leave El Dorado Hills due to a family situation, her devoted teachers, volunteers, students and parents came to the rescue. They found the space at 2203 Francisco Drive, in the Safeway shopping center, and transformed it into a three-studio enterprise. “They put in the floors, the mirrors, the barres, and the kids painted,” said Coleman.

Today there is a large studio for ballet and informal performances, a smaller studio especially for tap and a tiny tots studio decorated in pink. Students, young and adult, can pick from an array of classes: ballet, jazz, tap, lyrical, Celtic, hip hop, Polynesian, Latin, modern and ballroom.

Volunteer Linda Taylor, who has a daughter in the dance program, explained Coleman’s charm, saying, “She communicates so well with the little ones. She has such passion and love; it is infectious.”

The sprightly woman who assumes the character of Angelina Ballerina when she volunteers with



children at the El Dorado Hills Library, got a late start herself as a dancer.

“I was 13 when our family finally settled in London,” said Coleman. “My father was in the Royal Air Force and we traveled all over. I was the youngest of four sisters, and we all wanted to take dance lessons. My sisters were too old, so when I started they told me, ‘You’re doing this for all of us. You better be good.’”

Coleman won a scholarship to the Arts Educational Trust, a school like the one featured in “Fame,” that taught dance, drama and music. “Andrew Lloyd Webber (composer of “Phantom of the Opera”) was president and Julie Andrews and Jane Seymour were graduates,” she recalls.

She went on to the London Festival Ballet, where she received all around training grounded in the classical style.

For eight years Coleman danced with the Iranian National Ballet. “It was wonderful,” she said. “The shah’s wife, the empress, was head of the organization. We never had to worry about fund-raising. We had the best costumes, the best sets, the best

teachers.” When the shah was deposed, Coleman had to seek political asylum in the United States.

She had married a fellow dancer in the company and could not return to England because her daughter, Vivien, was born in Iran.

She arrived in San Jose, where she was instrumental in bring the San Jose Ballet Company to the city. She served on the faculty of the company and had her own studio in San Jose before she and her current husband decided to relocate to El Dorado Hills.

Linda Taylor describes Coleman’s approach to teaching dance as “nurturing, developing character and allowing children to experience the joy of achievement. Her directors and teachers have the same philosophy.”

Coleman said that if her students need more professional training than she can provide, she will help place them. However, two of her students this year were awarded dance scholarships to universities. One of her former students, Brendan Feeney, is dancing with the Regensburg Ballet in Germany. Some of her students are also in El Dorado Musical Theatre productions.

Another primary interest for Coleman is giving to the community. Her students perform in retirement homes and every year they present a performance to raise money for a charity.

Recipients have been the Neurofibromitosis Society, Family Connections, Progress House and National Ovarian Cancer Coalition. Last year Center Stage raised \$9,500 for



Village Life photo by Megan Jeremica

**A LOVE OF DANCE** – Georgina Coleman, owner of Center Stage Dance Academy, shares her passion of dance with students and fellow instructors. She also encourages students to give back to the community.

the Shriners Hospital.

Coleman was diagnosed with ovarian cancer in 2008 and was out for seven months. “It was just before our June recital,” she said. “The volunteers kept it going and my daughter acted as emcee.

I answered the phone in my hospital bed to hear the audience give me a big cheer.”

Center Stage Dance Academy has found a niche in the community and in the hearts of many. To celebrate, a day-long

sampling of free classes in all three studios will be held on Saturday, May 1. The summer recital will be at Folsom High School on June 29 and 30.

For more information visit [www.csdainfo](http://www.csdainfo).