



January 2021

Dear Supporter,

COVID Can't Keep us From Dancing!

TEDI students have been dancing since school started last fall. Artistic Director Kayla James and Music Director John Williams have developed an interactive format on Zoom that is surprisingly successful. “Making students feel seen and heard, even from miles away has done wonders for breaking down barriers,” says Kayla. “Take Kareem. He was one of the first to sign up—even though a lot of boys think dancing is a ‘girl thing.’ But he was shy about dancing and speaking in front of others, even on Zoom. He asked a lot of very detailed questions about the process. John and I drew him out in the discussions, and as Kareem gained confidence, he let us see him dance. Now he is one of the first in class and has even invited members of his family to the camera to meet his dance buddies.”

Each year since 1989, the Trenton Education Dance Institute (TEDI) inspired by the National Dance Institute’s (NDI) pedagogy utilizing the art and discipline of dance to help at-risk middle school children reach their full potential, allowing us to help a total of more than 6,000 adolescents living in communities affected by poverty, crime, and violence.

As we all know, COVID took a toll on the holidays last year. But Kayla was undaunted. She decided to celebrate the holidays with Kareem and the other students by dropping off gifts on the doorsteps of their homes and waving at them through her car window. “It’s so important for them to see that I am a real person, not just an image on their screens,” she says.

Dancing Together in Separate Spaces

“The most important element of a remote classroom experience is creating a setting where everyone feels comfortable, and doesn’t require a lot of space,” says Kayla. “Every class starts with a warmup. We alternate between activities that require sitting, standing, using the corners of your own square, blacking out the camera, and more. Each session introduces new steps that build on the previous ones. We can spotlight a solo as well as create small groups that rehearse together. John provides the live music and keeps students on their toes by playing various instruments, styles and tempos. We take frequent breaks for discussion and games, such as asking students to draw an emoji that describes them. We’ve even had a scavenger hunt where we asked students to find an object they particularly like and talk about it to the group.”

TEDI Talks

We have learned that we can deliver the magic of TEDI in unique ways. At the end of every session, Kayla asks the group a question, such as: “If you could make one wish that would help others, what would you wish for and why?” Every student who wants to speak has a chance to answer. Among the responses were: “Make people less hungry”; “Help people feel a sense of security”; “Help people to be happy and laugh more.”

Please see other side

While the delivery of our message has changed this year, the content has not. The program is not just about dancing. Our students learn that:

- Self-discipline, teamwork and concentration are skills that will help them navigate life
- They enjoy confidence and pride in personal achievement
- Constructive activity keeps them off the dangerous streets of Trenton
- They can appreciate the arts as a means of communication
- They CAN SUCCEED with HARD WORK, PRACTICE and COMMITMENT

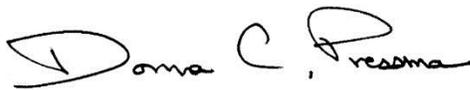
Parents, students, teachers and staff from CHS are now putting together the TEDI SWAT Team (Scholarship for the Willing, Able, and Talented) for those fifth-grade students who are looking to take their dance training to the next level. They will take the existing remote class for the 58 students from the Parker School and a second class designed for members of the Team (15 to 20 students) beginning in February. A virtual spring performance for the student dancers is being planned. And there will be an end-of-year virtual event where the TEDI students will have the opportunity to strut their stuff. In addition, TEDI students will take part in "Project Crescendo," which will be put together by the visual and performing arts departments in Trenton schools, K-12. This will be filmed in the style of the Julliard School's "Bolero" (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rqzkn-jX-JU>).

We are proud of our progress but, along with experts in the field, we are still deeply concerned that the national shift to remote learning for our students will widen persistent achievement gaps between income levels and between white students and students of Black and Latino heritage. **Your investment in TEDI will help ensure that our students will not be left behind!**

Please help us continue the MAGIC, the JOY and the LIFE LESSONS for our students in this New Year. Make a contribution today to TEDI, with its proven track record of results. **We appreciate any gift**, no matter how small, to this important program that has made a difference in the lives of Trenton children for 32years.

We invite you to visit www.chsofnj.org/portfolio-items/tedi-appeal-support and make a tax-deductible contribution today. Or use the enclosed envelope to send a check today.

Yours in Joy and Magic,



Donna Pressma
President and CEO
**Children's Home Society
of New Jersey**



Richard Bilotti
President
TEDI Board of Trustees

P.S. TEDI is still dancing remotely, but distance learning is creating challenges for arts programs that MUST be addressed THIS YEAR. Please don't let our kids be left behind!

P.P.S. Did you know that the new stimulus package includes a provision that is designed to encourage Americans to donate to their favorite charities? In 2021, even if you don't itemize deductions, you can make an "above-the-line" deduction for up to \$300 to a 501(c)(3) nonprofit. Married couples can take a deduction for up to \$600.