

HANSON SCHOOL OF DANCE

KELLY BLENNER-HASSETT

Lead Instructor, Principal Choreographer

When Medicine Hat's Hanson School of Dance opened its doors to students in the fall of 1991, Kelly Blenner-Hassett felt the joy in realizing a long-awaited dream. With just 35 students on the roster that first year, Kelly set out to create a unique setting for her charges to learn, to laugh and to develop a love of dance.

Born and raised in Eston, Saskatchewan, Kelly has long felt the creative pull of dance. The youngest daughter of teacher parents (dad was a school teacher, mom a dance teacher), Kelly grew up in an environment which encouraged creativity, continued education and a dedication to her craft. A natural performer, she began her "career" in dance at the tender age of three - schooled primarily at her mother's studio, Hanson School of Dance. From the beginning, mom Carol Ann noted that it was a near impossibility to keep her daughter out of the studio.

"Kelly always wanted to accompany me to class...and she loved to put on her ballet slippers and join in with the older students," says Carol Ann. "She also demonstrated a natural ability, a real talent for dance."

Talent and a desire to achieve. Kelly's natural abilities enabled her to make her own mark in the world, as she continued her education not only under her mother's tutelage but with a variety of other respected and highly qualified instructors. Throughout the years, Kelly continued to compete both in Canada and in the United States, garnering recognition in both settings - with everything from top honors in Provincial categories to second place in a national competition in the States. It was on the heels of these successes that she determined hers was a path destined for teaching.

"I love children - and I especially love the opportunity to teach each child from a very young age, to shape and nurture a creative spirit," says Kelly. "I have realized my dreams with my dance school. I am so fortunate to see my students gain knowledge, ability and an even greater level of self-esteem."

"Dance is such a positive force in a student's life. It's an experience that sticks with you and continues to influence you long after you have retired the ballet slippers," adds Kelly.

As owner and operator of Medicine Hat's Hanson School of Dance, Kelly brings with her over 14 years of teaching experience and as many years competing with her students in an array of competitions throughout Alberta and Saskatchewan. Her students have received accolades in a variety of venues, including numerous scholarships and trophies for outstanding performance and outstanding choreography.

To date, the school boasts over 300 students, from ages 3 to 19. Classes range from tap, jazz, ballet, lyrical, hip hop and musical theatre.

In addition, continued education for Kelly has remained paramount. She maintains a healthy desire for knowledge and over the years has accumulated her credentials which include:
Member of the C.D.T.A - Saskatchewan and Alberta Branch - Stage Division - Tap & Ballet Division; Certified teacher of the A.D.A.P.T. syllabus.

In all, Kelly sees her professional future unfold with the same clarity and dedication that she views every aspect of her life. She notes that she looks forward to ensuring the continued education of her students - nurturing both their development of skill and discipline - and to taking part in something very special for both her and those in her charge. Because for Kelly, it is indeed a family affair - as her youngest child, Payton Shay, is enrolled in tap, ballet and jazz alongside her other students. Payton demonstrates the same love for performing and desire to dance - deeply reminiscent of her mother's early years in the Eston studio. For Hanson School of Dance, family traditions do indeed live on.

Kelly lives in Medicine Hat with her husband Blake and their children, Conner, Keenan and Payton.

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