



Heart of Dance Organizational Resume

Heart of Dance is an arts learning and dance therapy organization that uses partner dance to transform the mental, physical and emotional wellbeing of our clients, bringing them joy, self-expression and community. This Minnesota nonprofit was founded by former State Senator, education advocate and amateur ballroom dancer, Ember Reichgott Junge; and dancer, educator and choreographer, Andrea Miranda in 2014, with their shared belief in the power of partner dance to heal and uplift!

Heart of Dance has served thousands of Minnesota youth through the globally recognized, evidence-based program **Dancing Classrooms**, which transforms 5th and 8th graders into mature, self-reliant, and elegant young ladies and gentlemen through its 10-week curriculum. This foundational program develops the best of what academics call Social Emotional Learning (SEL), life skills like motivation, grit, connection and listening that help us relate and interact as respectful, empathetic human beings in a coarsening world. Students not only learn 6-7 partner dances from around the world, but also explore countries of origin through group and individual writings and research projects.

The **Colors of the Rainbow Team Match (CORTM)**, made popular in the hit documentary, *Mad Hot Ballroom*, brings together hundreds of children, families and educators twice each year for a powerful, shared intergenerational experience of dance, music, personal growth and community. This event is an optional, extended journey beyond the residency for schools that want to give 12-14 of their students a special experience and offers their student body an additional opportunity to foster school spirit.

The team match is designed to bring children from around the state together. It shows them that they are part of a larger dancing family, and unites the vast diversity of cultures and ethnicities of Minnesota. All team matches confirm the core values of the Dancing Classrooms program: mutual respect, tolerance, teamwork, sportsmanship and elegance. The CORTM is also a wonderful community builder as we bring together students, schools and parent communities that otherwise would not interact. Together this larger group creates and shares a new “safe space”.

DC Academy is a year-long enrichment experience for Dancing Classrooms student alumni who wish to pursue a deeper exploration of the technical intricacies of various dance styles, with multiple performance opportunities to build confidence and self-esteem.

Building on the foundation of the Dancing Classrooms philosophy, adult programs include:

Barriers into Bridges, a one- to four-hour professional development workshop which engages entire teams in a series of collaborative exercises to examine our inherent assumptions about ourselves and



others and how these can interfere with communication and real human interaction. Program description: “Powerful partnerships succeed because of communication and teamwork! Heart of Dance will lead you step by step through creative, interactive ways to connect with others. You'll experience how empathy, teamwork, body language and respect are interwoven to strengthen personal and professional partnerships - and you'll learn some fun new dance skills along the way!”

Dance for Life is a 10-week residency for active seniors (**B3-Building Body, Brain and Balance**) and ambulatory memory-care elders (**B2-Building Brain and Balance**) and their caregivers, including seniors suffering from Parkinson’s and early-stage dementia. It weaves together music, storytelling and interactive dance to focus on four key areas: building physical strength and flexibility, improving balance to reduce the risk of falls, expanding social connections, and increasing cognitive focus to delay or diminish the effects of dementia – while sparking joy and passion! It concludes with an on-site community celebration event open to clients, staff, families and guests that bridges generational and cultural gaps with stories, performances and interactive dancing.

After active duty service, veterans often struggle to assimilate into civilian life, professionally and personally. Another program, not yet named and currently in development, is dance movement training for veterans and their partners that promotes self-esteem, provides access to emotional release, creates an increased sense of belonging, explores self-identity, and supports stress reduction, relationship development, and community reintegration.

At Heart of Dance we engage people of all ages in a shared experience of learning, cultural interaction and respectful touch while learning valuable life skills. We get people off their screens and on their feet, to look one another in the eye and create a powerful human connection of healing and happiness! Our programs are customizable to the audience and organization and have one thing in common - a compassionate and gifted teaching artist believes in you and who you can be, sets high expectations and then lifts you to a secure and joyful place you may have never known. Thanks to the engaging approach of our teaching artists who encourage with humor, empathy and imaginative storytelling, participants are soon mastering several dances, step by step...and loving it! And when asked, “May I have this dance, please?” the confident answer will be, “Yes...with pleasure!”



Research and Supporting Articles:

- <https://dancingclassrooms.org/category/research/>
- <http://thealzheimersproject.org/2014/12/ballroom-dancing-and-alzheimers-can-dancing-make-you-smarter/>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/features/alzheimers-and-exercise/index.html> (see references)
- <http://neuro.hms.harvard.edu/harvard-mahoney-neuroscience-institute/brain-newsletter/and-brain-series/dancing-and-brain>
- <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/why-your-brain-needs-exercise/>
- <https://www.parkinson.org/blog/tips/dance-through-life>

Awards and Media:

- A MN Philanthropy Partners “Nonprofit to Know” - <https://youtu.be/l2j07Z6Wlv0>
- Almanac - <https://youtu.be/qxBj7bsMR7g>
- Rochester – [Rochester Area Foundation](#)
- KARE11 - <https://youtu.be/qQHS8OZ1TYE>