

Life-long passion for dance leads to success

Picture a group of children pretending to be butterflies, twirling and leaping around a calming blue room. Their teacher is enthusiastic and encourages them to be creative and carefree. The children are smiling and having the time of their lives. This is much more than a dance lesson for their teacher, Amanda Harburn — it's the realization of a life-long dream.



Harburn, a student in the Small Business stream of Mount Royal's Bachelor of Applied Business and Entrepreneurship degree program, has combined her passion for dance and her drive for success to open Prestige Dance Academy in southwest Calgary.

"I was really scared at first because I didn't know if I would be able to attract students," she admits. But, the dance studio has more than tripled its enrolment since its 2002 opening, and Harburn is no longer worried. In fact, Prestige is doing so well that she is already looking forward to hiring instructors so that she can focus on the business end of things.

"Opening the dance studio and proving that I can do it successfully despite my age has been my biggest accomplishment," says the 21-year-old.

Prestige Dance Academy currently has more than 160 students enrolled in a wide range of classes, including jazz, ballet, tap, musical theatre, hip-hop, and also "mom and me" classes for mothers and their toddlers. Recreational and competitive students of all ages are welcome.

Harburn's business idea came at a young age. She started dancing when she was three years old and always imagined that she would become a dance teacher. As a teenager, she worked at a local dance studio where she had the chance to try almost every job — from caretaker to secretary to instructor — and realized that she wanted to do it all. "I wanted to be more than just a teacher," she says.

And so, Harburn combined that desire with an education in small business at Mount Royal. Through her program, she has learned how to balance the books, market her business and create a business plan. "It's a phenomenal degree — it gave me insight into what I would be facing when I started my own business. The courses are geared towards every kind of entrepreneur and the program prepares you for all aspects of small business."

Harburn may consider pursuing a teaching degree or MBA when she is finished at Mount Royal, but she is also determined to expand Prestige.

"I'm watching my dreams unfold before me," she says with a smile as the butterflies flutter past.

For more information call Prestige Dance Academy at 873-7228.

Amanda Harburn

Amanda Harburn, a fourth-year student in the Bissett School of Business, was recently named western region finalist in the 2004 CIBC Student Entrepreneur of the Year competition. The founder and owner of Prestige Dance Academy, a full-service dance studio for children and adults, won \$1000 and a chance to go to Toronto in May to compete for the national Student Entrepreneur of the Year title.

See Amanda's video:

http://business.mtroyal.ca/images/movies/amanda_cut_FINAL_MSTR.mov

www.business.mtroyal.ca