

Alexandra Ballet is funded, in part, by your gift to the Arts and Education Council.



“[Ballet has] instilled a sense of dedication, motivation and respect in me that carries through to everything in my life, not just dance.”

- Makensie Howe, dancer, Alexandra Ballet

Most days, 17-year-old Makensie Howe travels 40 minutes to and from her home in Arnold to Chesterfield, where she rehearses and takes ballet classes with the Alexandra Ballet Company. She often studies and does homework in the car as her mother drives, and manages to get good grades despite dancing nearly three hours night after night.

Makensie doesn't seem to mind the hard work; in fact, she craves it.

“Ballet is my passion,” she says. “Dancing is the best feeling in the entire world. Everything on my mind – worries about homework and tests – disappear. I become a completely different person.” The hard work, too, has paid off. Makensie recently learned that she earned a spot with the prestigious Houston Ballet's second, apprentice, company. This summer she will head to Houston for an intensive training program and then join the company in the fall. Doing so means she will be giving up her senior year at Fox High School and instead complete her high school education online. “I feel a little sad not finishing my senior year,” she says. “But I'm excited to start something new and start my life. I'm ready.”

Makensie began dancing when she was three. She took a variety of classes in tap, modern and ballet. By the time she was in sixth grade she realized ballet was the one form she most enjoyed and wanted to devote herself to it. So at age 12 she auditioned for Alexandra Ballet and was accepted. In early March, she danced the title role in the romantic ballet *Paquita*, drawing rave reviews.

Alexandra Ballet's reach extends beyond the stage. Each year, classrooms are provided with a workbook filled with ballet history and terminology, synopsis of the ballet, as well as puzzles and games aimed at educating the young audiences about ballet. In addition, nearly 1,500 children from across the bi-state region have the opportunity to attend the free “Young People's Performance,” offered by the Alexandra Ballet. In 2010, the Ballet welcomed the Missouri School for the Blind to their audience. Braille and large print materials were created to introduce the students to the world of ballet with a hands-on tour that included props, costuming, and dancers.

Makensie, who also is part of her high school's choir, wishes more people her age would participate in the arts, especially ballet, even as part of the audience.

“If more people came to the ballet they would see how great it can make you feel and how it provides an escape from life for just a few hours,” she said. “It can really take you in and transform the way you feel.”

To learn more about how your gift to the Arts and Education Council helps people like Makensie develop their gifts, please visit our website www.KeepArtHappening.org or call our development office at 314-289-4003.