Creating an Adaptive Dance Program for your Community

A HANDBOOK OF IDEAS, SUGGESTIONS, AND RESOURCES

Originally Created by Shira Greenberg, Founder & Artistic Director
Keshet Dance Company - Albuquerque, New Mexico
February 2000
With support from the Frost Foundation and the Carrie Tingley Hospital Foundation

Updated and reprinted
January 2016
With support from Dance/USA’s Engaging Dance Audiences and the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation
# Table of Contents

What is Adaptive Dance? 1

Who are the Participants? 1

Structure and Length of your Program 2

Appropriate Space for your Classes 3-4

Staffing Your Classes 4

Curriculum Ideas 4-6

Marketing Your Program 7

Funding Your Program 8-9

Resources/References 10

Example Registration Intake Form 11-12

Article: *Mixed-Ability Dance* by Minnie Baragwanath 13-14

Article: *PT Helps Children of All Abilities* by Julie Ellis 15-16
What is Adaptive Dance?

On a broad level, Adaptive Dance is an opportunity to explore and experience the joy of movement with a supportive, creative community, regardless of experience and/or abilities. It is also a wonderful opportunity to integrate these various levels of experience and abilities in a powerful, exciting, educational, and creative atmosphere.

When developing your definition of Adaptive Dance, it is important to keep in mind your goals for the program, for the students and for the community. Who are you trying to reach? What barriers are you intending to break down? What would you like your program to accomplish? Other names commonly used can be: “Physically Integrated Dance” or “Mixed Abilities Dance”

Who are the Participants?

A key component of an Adaptive Dance program is the notion that everyone can dance. Yet, it is important to establish some boundaries for your classes. Without these boundaries, the program becomes less productive and less beneficial for the participants. For example: If you are looking to create a program that integrates children with and without vision, this would not be the class for a hearing impaired student. If your class intends to focus on various levels of movement for cognitively able youth between the ages of 14 and 18, this would not be the class for a 15 year old with severe developmental disabilities, nor for a cognitively able, very enthusiastic 11 year old. This does not at all negate the idea that everyone can dance. But it is important to create the most appropriate and productive learning environment, as well as social environment, for your classes.

If you are able to develop a program which offers a variety of adaptive classes, then it is just a matter of determining the best placement for each student. If you are limiting your program to a specific focus, it is helpful to be in contact with other Adaptive Dance providers. More than likely, they will have slightly, or even extremely different focuses to their programs. This will allow you to refer students appropriately and have students referred to you, depending on their fit with the various classes offered.

Once you have more clearly developed your ideas for your own Adaptive Dance Program, developing an “intake form” is a useful tool for determining a potential student’s placement in the appropriate class (or referral to another program). This form gives you crucial information not only about a student’s learning style, but also their support needs and important medical information that may affect the student or the class (seizures, etc.). You may also want different intake forms depending on the length of class. For example: if you are having all day workshops or rehearsals then you will also need to know information about how much assistance the dancer may need with personal care activities like toileting or eating. However, in an hour long class you may not need to assist with those personal care times. In the back of this handbook is an example of the intake form used by Keshet Dance Company.
Structure and Length of your Program

Obviously the structure of your program will vary according to your goals and your participants, but here are a few ideas for program structures.

- **An introductory workshop**: 1-4 classes, each 1-3 hours in length, depending on ages of participants, level of class, scope of material to be covered, and number of participants. A workshop like this is helpful in determining the level of interest within your particular community and may help you determine and fine tune your specific focus for an ongoing program.

- **A performance workshop**: 3-6 classes, each 1-3 hours in length, depending on ages of participants, level of class, and amount of performance material to be developed. This workshop operates with an end goal of creating dance pieces to be performed in public venue. In just a few class meetings, you will probably want to collaborate with other performing artists for the final performance, giving an audience more than just a few minutes of material to watch. Or you might investigate other performance opportunities in which only a few minutes of material is desired, such as inclusion in a showcase, or part of an assembly, or within a lecture/demo context, etc.

- **Weekly Youth Class**: 12-16 week sessions (or a 9 month session, or a summer session). 45 minutes – 1 hour is usually an ample amount of time for a youth class.

- **Weekly Adult Class**: 12-16 week sessions (or a 9 month session, or a summer session). 1 – 1 ½ hours is an appropriate amount of time for this class.

Appropriate Space for your Classes

It is important to have an appropriate space for your Adaptive Dance Program in order to accomplish your goals. Ideally, a dance studio at least 30’ x 40’ in size with a sprung dance floor and mirror is what you want. But you can’t always get what you want! So if you can’t find the ideal space, you will need to prioritize your needs. Here is a list of things to consider when looking for a space:

- **Size**: At least 30’ x 40’, although 40’ x 50’ is better. Be careful not to get too big, especially if you are working with youth.

- **Floor**: A smooth surface for dancers in wheelchairs, no carpet. If you are working with any dancers who are not in chairs, a sprung floor will help prevent injuries. If you can’t find a sprung floor, veer away from concrete. If all you can find is concrete, you will want to make sure that all dancers wear supportive tennis shoes.
• **Sound System**: Be aware that if the space you decide to use doesn’t have any sound system, you will have to provide your own. (Dance classes often work much better with music!)

• **Acoustics**: Check out the acoustics in your dance space. How do voices and music carry? Working in a gymnasium can be difficult, not only because it can be too big, but the acoustics are not in your favor, especially if you are working with children. Since they tend to have less of an attention span, you just end up yelling a lot in order to be heard. Also, if you are using a gym, it makes music and vocal direction very difficult to hear at the same time. This doesn’t mean you can’t use a gym, just be aware of your space.

• **Temperature**: Just something of which to be aware. Make sure it will be warm enough to ask your dancers to dance without risking injury.

• **Bathroom Facilities**: Pretty much a given, but just make sure your dance space has accessible bathroom facilities.

• **Other uses of space / obstacles / distractions**: If your dance space is used for other events or programs during the week, be aware of any distractions you may way to take care of before your students arrive. For example, if the space is used by PTs and OTs during the week, there may be a lot of equipment in the space. If you are working with youth, it is beneficial to get to the space early to organize it, creating a distinct “dance space” and an “off limits” space. It is also good to be aware that if the space is used for various therapies, take great care to make it very clear that this is not a therapy session. This is dance class.

• **Waiting Room**: If you are working with youth, you will most likely be working with parents on some level. This can be a wonderful asset to your program as you will have the extra input and often times extra hands of knowledgeable and helpful adults. Depending on the goals and structure of your program, you may want to keep parents out of the dance class and give the youth a program with an element of independence. If this is your intent, it is necessary to have a place for parents to wait while their child(ren) are in class. Waiting somewhere within the actual dance space doesn’t work well for a number of reasons. Noise levels of parents talking to each other, distracting students and teachers is one. The natural inclination for a parent to jump in or call out suggestions to their child is another. It is just a matter of determining if you will benefit from parent involvement or if your program will work better without it.

• **Mirror**: If you can find a space with a mirror large enough to span the entire dance space, that is the ideal situation. A mirror enables the dancers to see movement on their own bodies as well as on other classmates, making a dance class much more productive in many areas.
Staffing your Classes

The ability levels, experience, and ages of your students will help you determine the number of staff necessary for each class. Goals and scope of content will also dictate, to a certain extent, necessary staff. “Staff” can take many forms: hired teachers, assistants, volunteers, interpreters, OTs, PTs, etc.

As long as all “staff” understands that they are expected to be active participants and dancers in the class, a one-to-one ratio is a really excellent ratio. It is important to also be aware that the staff is there to assist only to a certain extent. Be careful to keep in mind that this is a dance class, not a therapy session. Make sure not to cross or blend these lines, giving the students a unique, creative, and social activity. Also, if you do reach a one-to-one ratio, make sure staff continues to allow each student to really explore the movement on their own, problem solve, and work with other students in the class, not just other staff.

Curriculum Ideas

The following pages of curriculum ideas can be briefly explored within one class period or can be expanded and developed over longer periods of time. Each idea has space for you to describe the activity in your own words. This list is only a beginning springboard for your own ideas. Dance is so exciting for so many reasons, not the least of which are the unlimited possibilities!
Mirroring

Weight Sharing

Contact Movement

Contact Movement Suggestion

Human Legos

Moving Human Legos

Clay to Sculptures (Sculptures for Sale)

Group Sculpture

Small and Large Group Machines
Travel Patterns (Directions, Paths, Styles)

Exploring and Communicating – Qualities, Tempos, Levels, Shapes, Feelings/Emotions

Counting Music with Movement

Developing Movement Phrases

Connecting Movement Phrases

Other Ideas:
Marketing your Program

Check out all youth and adult Adaptive Activity Resources within your community. There may already be some sort of a “roster” listing organizations or individuals that provide a variety of services to individuals with various levels of abilities. Check with any rehabilitation hospitals. If there is not such a resource, you may have to create your own. Don’t limit yourself. Investigative medical communities, facilities and employees; social organizations; City or County Community Centers; PT or OT organizations; Veterans Disability Programs / PVA (Paralyzed Veterans); parent support groups or community groups for specific disabilities; etc.

A few marketing ideas for you:

- Once you establish connection with the appropriate organizations, talk, talk, talk about your program. Word of mouth is always the best advertising.

- The organizations or individuals you are working with may have newsletters that will advertise and promote your program.

- You might think about offering a free “tester” class to get people interested.

- See if there are any events going on in the community that would be appropriate for advertising/promoting your program.

- Develop a flyer that you can post and hand out with a clear contact number for more information.

- If you have the funds, you may want to take out advertising in appropriate print publications, or create a commercial, or pay to “boost” a social media page.

- Many radio stations will announce your program for free as a PSA (Public Service Announcement) if you put together a 30-second and/or 60 second script for the station.

- Find community events/calendar listings in your area and list the class there. These are usually free (radio stations, television stations, newspapers, online community listings, etc.)

- See if you can get information to therapists, teachers and other staff who work in the public school system.

- Contact the newspapers. If this is a new program for your area, they might want to write an article about it.
Funding your Program

There are a variety of ways to fund your program. First, you will need to come up with a budget to determine what costs will be incurred.

**EXPENSES:**
While you might not need all of these items, below are some potential costs to keep in mind, depending on the scope of your program:

- Marketing – Anything from creating a flyer to placing newspaper/magazine/online ads to creating and airing commercials. If you are planning on having a performance as well, don’t forget about the marketing costs for both the program and the performances.
- Postage
- Printing (other than marketing) registration forms, intake forms, etc.
- Class/Rehearsal Space Rental
- Performance Space Rental
- Transportation
- Costumes
- Props
- Music and music rights/royalties
- Insurance Fees
- Dance Instructors or Assistants
- PTs or OTs
- Administrative Hours
- Membership fees (to coalitions, other service organizations, etc)

Now don’t let this scare you! If you don’t anticipate a lot of funds for your program, remember that so much of this can be done with volunteer hours and some creative problem solving!!!

**REVENUES:**
Once you have put together your budget, brainstorm about revenue/funding sources appropriate for your needs:

- Registration fees/tuition – depending on how you are structuring your program, tuition might cover a large portion, if not all, of your costs. However, if you don’t know how many students will register, or if you’d like to offer the class at low/no cost, or if you have a larger budget that can’t be covered by tuition alone, you can subsidize with many different fundraising possibilities.
• Grants – If you are not affiliated with a non-profit organization, look into non-profits in your area which may have similar interests or goals which may want to partner with you. Also, you can seek a “fiscal sponsor” which will serve as an umbrella organization for you/your project in order to help you solicit appropriate funding. Many dance coalitions or arts alliances offer this service to their members.
  o In New Mexico, you can join the Keshet Ideas and Innovation Center (KIIC) which is a business resource center for creative entrepreneurs. Through KIIC, you have access to free membership for one year with Fractured Atlas, which can provide fiscal sponsorship for your project, allowing you to apply for grants.
  o To find appropriate grants for your project – here is a beginning list of places to look:
    ▪ The Grantsmanship Center (tgci.com)
    ▪ New Mexico Grantmakers Directory (nmgrantmakers.org)
    ▪ Federal Grants Listing (Grants.gov)
    ▪ The Grant Plant Upcoming Grants (thegrantplantnm.com/upcoming-grants)
    ▪ Guidestar (guidestar.org)
    ▪ The Foundation Center (foundationcenter.org)
    ▪ The Chronicle of Philanthropy (philanthropy.com)
    ▪ Look at funding lists from other similar programs
    ▪ Get on email lists from other similar programs, funding resource programs, etc

• Corporate Sponsors – If you are aware of a business or corporation with matching interests or a connection to your program and/or participants, they may be interested in underwriting all or some of your program. You should be prepared to offer a good deal of advertising in exchange for their generosity, ex. Wells Fargo Bank presents…, or Adaptive Dance Sponsored by … (in big bold letters!), perhaps free tickets to the show, invitations to classes and rehearsals, a thank you letter or picture from the participants, a plaque to hang on their wall, free ads in your program if you have one, etc.

• Local organizations – Kiwanis, Rotary Club, Women Entrepreneurs, etc., etc. Often times, these groups are looking for an exciting and positive new program to support.

• Rehabilitation Centers or Hospitals – They may already have a system in place to support new ideas such as this.

• COLLABORATION – This is a great one, and it usually helps everyone involved. Think of all types of organizations with which you could collaborate: hospitals, parks and recreation, dance schools, public or private schools, universities (PT or OT programs, dance programs, integrated education programs). Through these collaborations you may be able to get space, interns, marketing, etc.
Resources/References

**Keshet**
*Keshet Dance Company*
*Keshet Center for the Arts*
*Keshet Ideas and Innovation Center (KIIC)*
*Keshet Kinesthetic Education Laboratory (K-Lab)*
4121 Cutler Ave NE, Albuquerque, NM 87110 (505) 224-9808

**Other Adaptive Dance Programs, Companies, etc**
AXIS Dance Company – Oakland, CA        [www.axisdance.org](http://www.axisdance.org)
Dancing Wheels – Cleveland, OH          [www.dancingwheels.org](http://www.dancingwheels.org)
DanceAbility International – Eugene, OR  [www.danceability.com](http://www.danceability.com)
Candoco – London, UK                   [www.candoco.co.uk](http://www.candoco.co.uk)
Karen Peterson and Dancers, Miami, FL   [www.karenpetersondancers.org](http://www.karenpetersondancers.org)
Momo Mixed Ability Dance Theatre – Calgary, Alberta [www.momodancetheatre.org](http://www.momodancetheatre.org)
Wheelchair Dancers – San Diego, CA      [www.wheelchairdancers.org](http://www.wheelchairdancers.org)
American Dance Wheels Foundation        [www.americandancewheels.org](http://www.americandancewheels.org)
IPC Wheelchair Dance Sport               [www.paralympic.org/wheelchair-dance-sport](http://www.paralympic.org/wheelchair-dance-sport)
Very Special Arts New Mexico            [www.vsartsnm.org](http://www.vsartsnm.org)
Supported by the Carrie Tingley Hospital Foundation, this one week camp is designed for dancers with varying levels of physical and developmental abilities.

If student has not attended a Keshet dance class in 2015 please submit a Youth Information, Agreement, and Release Form with your registration. IARs and Intake Forms are available at the front desk and keshetarts.org.

Please complete the following information:

Student Name: ___________________________________________ Age: __________
Parent/Guardian Name(s):__________________________________________
Address: _________________________________________________________
Phone: _______________ Email: ____________________________________

Does the child use an assistive mobility device (wheelchair, walker, crutches, etc.): YES NO

If using a wheelchair or other mobility device, is she/he able and/or willing to move out of the chair/mobility device? _________________________________________________________

Can he/she move across a room independently? If not, what type of assistance is needed? _________________________________________________________

Can the student follow multiple step directions? If not, what approach do you recommend? _________________________________________________________

What is the student’s communication ability/style? (i.e. quiet, talkative, nonverbal, impaired speech or hearing, communication device, etc) _________________________________________________________

Adaptive Dance Camp for ages 10-18
July 13th -17th 10:00am to 3:00pm
Full week package: $50
Are there any movements or positions that would cause the student pain or harm? __________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Are there any special personal care needs that Keshet camp staff should know about (i.e. bathroom use assistance, etc.). Please describe: ______________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Please list any medications the child is taking: _________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Please list any dietary restrictions and food allergies: _________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Is there anything else we should know about the student that would assist us in providing maximum fun in a safe environment? _______________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Caregiver Name(s): _____________________________________________________________
Caregiver Phone Number(s):______________________________________________________

Dancer t-shirt size:  SM   M   L   XL   XXL

Full Week Camp Total $50  □ cash  □ check  □ credit card

**Tuition is non-refundable and non-transferable after first day of camp**
MIXED ABILITY DANCE

by Minnie Baragwanath

Any one who wants to dance can, according to Catherine Chappell, teacher and advocate of mixed ability dance in Auckland.

Through dance, Catherine Chappell is breaking down the physical and psychological limitations that society places on people with disabilities.

"It's really giving people empowerment over their bodies and enabling them to move in ways that they hadn't previously thought they could," says Catherine Chappell.

First time dancer and Royal New Zealand Foundation for the Blind member Faolo Urumapu supports this view and believes that dance could increase the confidence of blind people.

"I think blind people may worry that they are doing something odd when they dance, but in this class you don't feel like that, you feel normal. It's great."

Mixed ability dance is exactly that - mixed. Classes include dancers with physical, intellectual and sensory disabilities, professional and amateur dancers as well as children and adults all working together. What they all have in common is a desire to dance. Many have never danced before.

Mixed ability dance first emerged in Britain and the USA during the mid-80s. It evolved out of a number of dance forms including Contact Improvisation, a form of dance that relies on touch between two or more dancers. Through physical contact the dancers are able to develop their sense of space and movement.

It is this relationship with Contact Improvisation that makes mixed ability dance ideal for blind and vision-impaired dancers.

"You don't need to see to do it," says dancer and Royal New Zealand Foundation for the Blind member Rhonda Du Toit. "All you need is to have balance, feeling and a lot of imagination."

Catherine Chappell prefers to dance with her eyes closed as it allows her to work on an intuitive and sub-conscious level. "I do a lot of blind contact work because it shuts out the extraneous visual input, meaning that I can really focus on the internal sensations I'm feeling and allow the sensations to inform my movement."

Catherine is a freelance dancer, teacher and choreographer. She was a member of Limbs Dance Company in New Zealand, and Company Vivienne Newport in Germany. In 1996 she travelled to the USA to attend the First International DanceAbility Teacher Training Intensive in Oregon. For the past two years she has been involved in the development of mixed ability dance in New Zealand, teaching classes and workshops for a variety of disabilities and at many different venues.
At the start of each class, Catherine uses a series of group exercises to slowly warm up the bodies and minds of her pupils. Ever conscious of the different needs of her students, she ensures each step is accessible by, for example, giving tactile demonstrations to the blind dancers and clear simple instructions for dancers with an intellectual disability.

Gradually the pace of the class picks up as the tribal beat of Celtic music is introduced. Dancers alternate between working in pairs tracing each other's outline, to dancing freely in a space of their own, and forming a moving changing group structure in the middle of the room.

The energy and laughter grows as the dancers become more confident with each other and their own ability.

"You start off shy and then become more and more confident," says Foundation member Amanda Du Toit. Her twin sister Rhonda says there is freedom to experiment: "You can do what you want, you can go totally mad if you want to."

"The joy and expression is amazing," says Chappell, describing the atmosphere of her classes. "It's really because of the depth of communication between the dancers. There's energy being passed and creativity being expressed. The room's alive."

Chappell believes mixed ability dance is evidence that dance is evolving. Where once there was a narrow emphasis on a certain aesthetic such as the classic ballerina body type or dance style, there is now more emphasis on "authentic movement."

"To me, movement is dance and if people are present in their bodies, expressing themselves through movement, then it's dance. Having disabled dancers moving in their own authentic way is as much movement and dance as anybody else's dancing.

Mixed Ability dance is at the cutting edge of modern dance internationally. Professional dancers and teachers like Chappell are turning to it for a totally new dance experience. Catherine Chappell has used her Oregon training to develop her own teaching style in New Zealand:

The teacher and dancer is drawn to the challenge of mixed ability dance. "It extends me artistically and forces me to find new ways of moving, communicating and dancing," says Catherine Chappell who will give a public performance of her work during October at Auckland's Maidment Theatre.

Everyone is welcome to attend Chappell's Auckland classes. For more information contact cchappell@clear.net.nz.

PT Helps Children of All Abilities Become Involved With the Performing Arts

By JULIE ELLIS

A performing arts company for children with and without disabilities has grown far beyond the expectations of the Arizona physical therapist who started it 10 years ago.

Marcia Berger, PT, started Third Street Kids in 1985 in the living room of her home because she wanted to share her love of the arts and give children something to do after school. Since then, the company has continued to grow and gain interest in the community.

“I saw that a lot of the children I was working with in therapy had nothing to do in the afternoons when they were done with school,” she said. “I grew up in New York — my mother was in the theater and I have studied dance all my life — so I have always been exposed to the arts.

“Dance gave me a whole new realm for self esteem and confidence,” she continued. “So I thought a performing arts company would not only give these kids something to do, it would help them feel good about themselves and what they were doing.”

Ms. Berger also believed that this type of activity would allow the children to give something back to the community.

“There are so many things in the community that these children can take advantage of, but they don’t always have the opportunity to give something back,” she said. “This gives them a chance to do performances where they can invite people and they feel like it is their responsibility to do a good job.”

Third Street Kids currently offers classes in dance, music and acting. Along with the artistic skills, the classes also teach children about improvisation, self expression and communication.

In addition to many community performances throughout the year, Third Street Kids also does two major productions annually. Some of the performances are based on original screenplays and others are renditions of well-known works.

“It is very important to us that when we put on a show it is well done artistically and that people aren’t just coming to see their children or the poor handicapped kids,” Ms. Berger said. “Our work has to be accepted because if it is not, we are going to get that type of reaction.”

“I think what has made this company last so long and be able to do such fine work is that someone who understands the disabilities the children have... is working with the artists.” — Marcia Berger, PT

She said it was difficult at first to get Third Street Kids established as a performing arts organization.

“People wanted to see us as a social service organization or as a group for children with disabilities,” she said.

The hard work and dedication of everyone involved with Third Street Kids has paid off. The group has been accepted as an artistic organization and recently received a National Endowment for the Arts grant.

DISABILITY AWARENESS

One of the main goals of Third Street Kids is to promote disability awareness through the arts.

“We really try to get the message across that we are all different and that we can enjoy the differences of each other,” Ms. Berger said. “Just because someone uses a wheelchair does not mean he or she doesn’t have hopes and dreams.”

“What we try to teach is acceptance,” she added.

Ms. Berger said she encountered a lot of prejudices among different groups of people when she first started Third Street Kids.

“People who are blind thought people who are deaf were stupid and people who are deaf thought people who...
blind were stupid,” she said.

As the children started to work together, the prejudices and stereotypes began to fade, she said.

“Within our company, we are a living example of how people can help each other and work together,” she said.

She also said it has been difficult to find teachers who can challenge the children.

“It wasn’t easy to find artists that would do a class as good for our kids as they did for other children,” she said.

“They usually watered them down a lot of the time.”

She said the artists were often intimidated when they would go into the classroom and encounter children in wheelchairs, children with visual or hearing impairments, children with cerebral palsy and children with different learning disabilities.

“They came into a classroom with such diversity that they didn’t really know where to begin,” she said. “I think some of them were also afraid the children might break.”

Ms. Berger said taking the time to educate these teachers about the children and their disabilities has been the key to the success of Third Street Kids.

“I think what has made this company last so long and be able to do such fine work is that someone who understands the disabilities the children have, their bodies and their learning patterns, is working with the artists,” she said.

“When someone tries to do it alone, it just can’t happen.”

ABILYMPICS

Nine members of Third Street Kids, six with disabilities and three without,

recently represented the United States at the International Abilympics in Perth, Australia.

The Abilympics is an international group with a large rehabilitation focus. There is a performing arts section which allows artists from around the world to do shows and share their work.

More than 200 performers from about 50 countries participated in the event, Ms. Berger said.

“It was a terrific experience for the kids,” Ms. Berger said. “They had a wonderful time meeting people from all over the world.”

Third Street Kids did a musical theater that featured dance and original music written by members of the organization.

“I was very happy with the performance,” Ms. Berger said. “It was our first piece that was fully choreographed.”

One of Third Street Kids’ original songs was also featured in the show’s grand finale.

“It was really wonderful to meet people who are doing similar work and who have some of the same interests,” Ms. Berger said.

REWARDS

“Working with Third Street Kids has been a rewarding experience for me,” Ms. Berger said. “I just thought that I was going to do something for the children after school in the living room of my own home.”

“I never expected that we would grow to this extent,” she added.

Seeing the dedication and enthusiasm of the children has made it all worthwhile, Ms. Berger said.

“Third Street Kids has given the children inspiration — given them a reason to speak clearly and to improve their reading skills,” she said.

She said one boy with cerebral palsy, who started dancing with Third Street Kids four years ago, has been able to improve control of his right arm as well as his speech.

“When he first started with us, it was very difficult to understand him,” she said. “Now, he does a lot of public speaking about disability awareness.”

“I have really seen wonderful results,” she said.