

Alton Dance Studio Continues Classes Online, Has Already Been A Big Success After A Week-And-A-Half

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
April 2 2020 11:17 AM



ALTON --- After their closure on Mar. 17, due to the COVID-19 Coronavirus pandemic, many public and private schools in Illinois have turned to E-learning, as classes continue to be conducted online in many districts.

And it's also true in the case of the DK Dance Productions studios in both Alton and Florissant, Mo., as the studio has started conducting its dance classes online while the pandemic continues around the world.

And it's been a very successful start to the classes, as the students and teachers are able to connect both on livestreamed and prerecorded classes.

"We're a week-and-a-half in, and the teachers and the kids are loving it," said owner and co-founder Darci K. Ward. "I think the real part of it was behind the scenes, getting it all set up."

After the suspension of classes at the two studios after stay-at-home orders were made in Illinois by Gov. J.B. Pritzker, Ward and her teachers set up the online classes and launched a website Mar. 23. The site livestreams 78 classes per week, and also has over 100 prerecorded videos, with dance recital routines, strength and conditioning and flexibility exercises and functional movement classes for all of its students. There's also pop-up storytime videos for the kids and exercise classes for the adults included on the website.

"The kids can pull up the videos anytime to exercise," Ward said, "but they also have their regular classes with their teachers at their regular times at our physical location."

Ward feels that dancers are known for thinking on their feet and adapting to their situations, and she feels that her students achieve that with the online classes.

"Many of our families call DK their third place," Ward said. "This is the place outside home and school where they feel as though they matter and belong. My main focus is to continue developing the social and emotional health of our student and families during this time of social distancing by giving them something from their normal schedule."

Each schedule is found on the website, and Ward feels that the continuation of the classes serves as an extension of the human touch that is still so very important during the current crisis.

"Dance education is very much like human connection," Ward said, "so this will do OK for us for now, but there's no substitute for in-person interaction with a live teacher, or an in-person class."

The conversion to online classes has already been a success, as Ward and her teachers have formed a virtual online classroom to keep the kids engaged in their classes, and also allowing the students to keep in touch with their classmates.

"I think we were able to convert the business into a virtual classroom to help with our immediate needs," Ward said, "and to keep the kids moving, and see their teachers and classmates."

And Ward is looking forward to the day when she and her teachers can reunite with their students in the actual studios.

"We just miss these kids, and we think we have a pretty stinking cool job," Ward said with a laugh. "We miss the kids, we miss their hugs, their silly stories. We just miss all of it."

The company was founded in 2006, and teaches children as young as 18 months through adult ages, with classes in ballet, jazz, tap, musical theater, poms, hip hop and tumbling for all abilities. For more information, please log on to the studio's website, www.dkdancepro.com.