

Sisters Dance Academy marks 10 years on the hardwood

This year marks Sisters Dance Academy's 10th anniversary and Lonnie Liddell, owner and artistic director, couldn't be more excited and humbled by how the studio has grown over the years.

Liddell began teaching dance over 12 years ago after moving her family to Sisters. When Liddell and her family first moved to Sisters in 2006 there was a small studio in town called "Dancerfly" run by Sundi McClain. Liddell's oldest daughter, Makenna, was 5 years old at the time and Lonnie really wanted to get her involved in dance classes.

Upon finding Dancerfly, Liddell said, "I was so excited to find a dance studio in our little town. Makenna started taking classes right away and I starting taking adult classes, too. Sundi was such a vibrant, positive person, someone I was so happy to have met and to start dancing with! She could tell that I had dance training and immediately approached me about teaching classes. This is where my dance journey in Sisters began."

Lonnie had studied dance her whole life, focusing mainly on ballet and later-on studying tap, jazz, and hip hop. After heading off to Brigham Young University in 1997, she continued her dance education as well as starting a degree in recreational therapy, hoping to incorporate using her love for dance in working with children who have special needs. Lonnie and her

husband, Peter, started a family while in their early 20s and Lonnie decided being a full-time mom while her children were young was very important to her. Their family moved from Spokane, Washington, to Pleasant Grove, Utah, and then with a desire to put roots down in the Northwest, relocated to Sisters.

Only about nine months after starting classes and teaching at Dancerfly, owner Sundi McClain moved and closed her studio. Lonnie, with three young children in tow, didn't feel like it was the right time for her to run a studio, so began teaching classes out of her home for her children's friends. She would move the furniture aside, and with hardwood floors in the living room it worked for a short time as a make-shift ballet studio. Eventually the interest grew and with her family a little older, she decided it might be time to expand to renting a space. At the time, Cascade Fitness had a perfect studio space with wood floors, ballet barres and mirrors. The Sisters Dance Academy was born — and officially opened it's doors in January of 2009.

The studio started with just 25 students but continued to grow and offer more classes and more styles, eventually outgrowing that space. In 2012, on the cusp of having her fourth baby, Lonnie took the big leap of faith to sign a lease on a larger space in the Ray's Shopping Center, that

afforded the ability to have two studio spaces within the unit. After settling in and the student base continuing to grow, the dance academy took a new step in 2014 with organizing its Performance Ensemble. This is an audition-based dance team, with the emphasis on performing in the community and competing once a year. It started off with just a handful of dancers, and now the Performance Ensemble comprises two teams — a Junior Team comprised of seventh- and eighth-graders and a Senior Team, comprised of high school students — a total of 25 very talented dancers. The Junior and Senior Performance Ensemble, under the direction of Kayla Williams and Lonnie Liddell, recently competed at the Turn it Up dance competition on the University of Oregon campus, and came home with high scoring trophies.

The Sisters Dance Academy was also presented the Showmanship Award — an award that honors one studio for being positive and supportive of other dancers, helpful and easy to work with and really gave it their all during the competition. This award is truly an honor to receive as there were over 20 other studios and teams competing.

The Sisters Dance Academy, now with approximately 220 students, offers classes for 18-month-olds through adults, in styles including ballet, tap, jazz, hip hop, contemporary, Irish and high fitness. The academy strives to provide a friendly, positive environment and is continuously striving to adapt to the needs of this growing, amazing town of Sisters. The Sisters Dance Academy will be celebrating it's 10th anniversary at their upcoming year-end performance at the Sisters High School on June 22, with a matinee performance at 1 p.m. and an evening performance at 6:30 p.m. The show is entitled, "Let's Celebrate — A Decade of Dance in Sisters!" This



PHOTO BY KIMBERLY MANLEY / EMILY GREEN

Lonnie Liddell started teaching from her home —and now has a thriving dance studio in Sisters.

performance will be highlighting some of the favorite numbers from the past 10 years, so will truly be a walk down memory lane. It will also be showcasing some new and exciting numbers that are sure to bring joy to your heart and make you want to dance in your seat! The Sisters

Dance Academy hopes the whole town will join in the fun, entertainment and celebrate together! Tickets are \$12 for teens and adults, \$7 for children age 12 and younger. Tickets are reserved seating and can be purchased online at www.danceinsisters.com or at the door.



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Sisters dancers will showcase on June 22 at Sisters High School.



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