

COLIN MURPHEY PHOTO

Students at Encore Dance Studio toss packages to each other during practice.



GIFTED KIDS

Dancers' recital brings in Christmas toys for fellow children

By **KATHERINE LACAZE**
FOR COAST WEEKEND

In the words of 10-year-old Gwendolyn Smith, Encore Dance Studio's fourth annual Toy Drive Recital is about "raising toys for kids who don't get presents at Christmas, by dancing."

Instead of paying for admission to the recital — taking place at 6:30 p.m. Friday, Dec. 14, at the Seaside

Civic & Convention Center — attendees are asked to bring a toy to donate to Toys For Tots.

In past years, this has yielded a giant pile of soon-to-be presents for families in need. Being able to generate such an outcome through jazz, ballet, hip hop and tap dancing makes the dancers "feel really special," studio owner Denele Sweet said.

"I remind them of that when we are rehearsing," she said. "When they

realize people are coming to watch them dance, and they are helping other kids, it is really fun for them to take pride in that."

Leveling up

Each year, the hour-and-a-half recital features most of the same music, with different skill or grade levels performing designated pieces.

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IF YOU GO

Encore Dance Studio Toy Drive Recital

Where: Seaside Civic & Convention Center, 415 First Ave., Seaside

When: Friday, Dec. 14. Doors open at 6 p.m., performance starts at 6:30 p.m.

Admission: A gift to donate to Toys for Tots

For more information: Call the studio at 503-717-1637 or email encoregearhart@msn.com