

# African Dance Program Thrives

continued ▲ from Metro

them because I was afraid I would miss a movement."

Speed could be counted among those in the crowd looking forward to the June 6 initiation-rite performance involving all 20-some dancers and 13 drumming

students at 7 p.m. in the SEI auditorium, 3920 N. Kerby Ave.

Manyongai-Jones argues that this final performance will only represent a culmination of months of discipline. There hasn't been a beginning class for almost 20 years; she chooses students in auditions every October

based on their innate ability and passion to respond to drumbeats.

Following the tryouts, she mandates attendance in four hours of practice each week, always denying her students any excuse to shirk educational challenges at least through college. "If I can come from the jungle of Africa and get a good

education in America and do what I'm doing, then there is no reason why you shouldn't succeed," she says.

She doesn't have to subsidize the program with her own money for the first year since its founding, but Kukatonon means "we are one" in the Kpelle language of Liberia, and

the significance continues to resonate through every aspect of her life. Calling dance part of her "spirit," there's no part of her curriculum she can take lightly.

"When I say that it takes a village to raise a child, it means that the people, all people, community leaders, teachers, uncles, aunts, sisters and brothers, should always be an important part of a child's life, whether it is your child or not," she says.



"Happy Birthday Lucy Mae!"  
Love Mama,  
Family & Friends



Roia Manyongai-Jones' Kukatonon troupe, including drummers Sekouba Walker and Hakim Muhammad, delight an audience at Papa Murphy's corporate headquarters in Vancouver.

## Local Resident Leads by Example

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bags of aluminum cans to help buy student supplies, yarn to be used by volunteers to knit into hats and booties for premature babies and more.

The walls are covered with artwork and letters from children and

community organizations thanking Brown for her volunteerism. Also known as "The Bead Lady," Brown donates her time teaching school children statewide about human rights through the history of beads.

She also spends her summers volunteering at Western Oregon University's annual weeklong Mel

Brown jazz workshop for 150 middle- and high-school students.

"For more than 20 years, Bobbye has led by example on how to include music to enrich one's own life, as well as share and enjoy this interest with others," said Debby Robertson, program manager at Western Oregon University, who

nominated Brown.

In recognition of Brown's award, PGE donated a \$500 Outstanding Volunteer Grant in her name to the Mel Brown Workshop.

The company's Outstanding Volunteer Awards was created to reward the community spirit of PGE employees and retirees.

## Student Ambassador

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excursions and is familiar with local customs will meet the group upon arrival.

President Dwight D. Eisenhower founded People to People during his presidency in 1956 with citizen leaders including entertainer Bob Hope, Olympic champion Jesse Owens, amusement entrepreneur Walt Disney and Hallmark Cards founder Joyce Hall.

Having served as a military commander, Eisenhower believed that ordinary citizens of different nations could make a difference where governments could not.

People to People Student Ambassador program is based in Spokane and has been coordinating educational travel for over 50 years.

Gamez-Reyes' family is helping with fundraising for the trip. Her mother Barbara Gamez can be reached by E-mail at bgamez@uuno.com.



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