

WORK HARD | DO YOUR BEST | NEVER GIVE UP | BE HEALTHY!



spotlight

FALL 2021

NDI-NM.ORG

and... WE'RE BACK!

It is indeed a sight for sore eyes: In elementary school gymnasiums across Albuquerque, Santa Fe, Española, and Pojoaque, students are dancing in person with their NDI New Mexico instructors to the incomparable sound of live piano accompaniment.

The same magic is also happening once again at The Hiland Theater and The Dance Barns: ballet, tap, and hip-hop classes, just to name a few, are in full swing. You can hear feet stomping, unbridled children's laughter and voices of adult encouragement, all against a backdrop of finger-snapping tunes.

It wasn't easy, but after all these months, NDI New Mexico is back, live and in person!

"The foundation of our work is the powerful relationship between students and our excellent instructors," said Russell Baker, NDI New Mexico Executive Director. "There was just a huge desire on the part of our students, families, educational partners and staff to bring us back together in a safe, healthy and happy way."

The eventual return of the NDI New Mexico community to in-person instruction began over the summer and required intense communication, unprecedented levels of planning and, above all, patience.

“

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"Online learning served its purpose, but schools were not interested in a virtual NDI New Mexico experience for students if there was an opportunity to conduct our classes in-person," said Jackie Burns, Director of In-School Outreach programs. The NDI New Mexico team worked closely with public school districts as well as individual school principals and other officials to navigate a new approval process and ultimately get the green light to return to in-person instruction.

In addition, NDI New Mexico's entire teaching staff underwent special training focused on how to teach students in a safe, distanced way, yet maintain the integrity of the NDI New Mexico curriculum. Adaptations included an increased use of sign language. "Teaching and learning through masks can be challenging," Burns said. "Sign language can give everyone's vocal cords a break."

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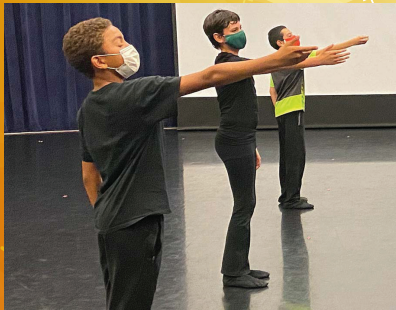
WHAT'S inside



Meet Tom Porras,
Director of
Advanced Training



Guess Who's
The Best
AGAIN?



(and...WE'RE BACK!, continued)

NDI New Mexico staff also worked diligently to establish protocols for Afterschool programs at The Hiland Theater and The Dance Barns. "Our primary focus was on safety," said NDI New Mexico Artistic Director Liz Salganek. The artistic team did extensive strategizing on issues such as studio capacity and flow to ensure students could remain socially distanced while moving through space during classes and rehearsal. The buildings were also adapted with additional air purifiers and other health and safety equipment.

Another important task was developing an Afterschool class schedule that provided the full complement of NDI New Mexico's dance disciplines for all age groups, from the youngest children to advanced dancers, while at the same time ensuring social distancing.

The Residency program has also undergone some novel adjustments with safety and personal connection in mind. For example, the Residency programs in Socorro and Silver City will be three-week hybrid programs.

And so, with all the hard work and anticipation, how does it feel to be back together after so many months?

“

I believe that now more than ever we treasure the time we can have together in classes and rehearsals.”

"It has been the most joyful experience for kids and the NDI New Mexico staff," Burns said. "We maintained the connection with remote instruction, but there's nothing like being in a room and participating in that energy."

Said Rodney Rivera, Dance Barns Artistic Director, "I believe that now more than ever we treasure the time we can have together in classes and rehearsals. The masks on our faces remind me of the fragility of life, but when I see the shining eyes of my students, I see resilience, strength, courage, passion, and determination."

And one NDI New Mexico student perhaps said it best: "Now we're back together and it feels better than ever. NDI helped me through the pandemic, and it will continue to help me the rest of my life!"

STATEWIDE MAP

NDI New Mexico has served over 140,000 students across the state since 1994.



HIGHLIGHTS



Open Houses at The Dance Barns and The Hiland Theater welcomed families and gave students an opportunity to meet their instructors and dance!



NDI New Mexico Dancers made the set on the Santa Fe Plaza of "Good Morning America's Rise and Shine."



First Place Winner in THREE CATEGORIES!



After our Teaching Excellence® Teacher Training workshop this summer, we hired six new instructors! They are continuing training with our In-School master teachers.



NDI New Mexico's creative VIRTUAL GALA 2021 showcased dancers around the state and captured hearts!



Thank you to photographer Don Usner for capturing "Our Dancing Families." A grant from the Daddy Appleseed Fund (DAF) made it possible for these images to grace the walls at The Dance Barns.



NDI New Mexico and Lightning Boy Foundation, a wonderful organization that teaches Native American hoop dancing to children, received word from Santa Fe Arts and Culture that a \$30,000 Digital Collaborative Impact grant will be awarded for the creation of a collaborative film.



Thank you Rio Grande Credit Union for supporting New Mexico's children and choosing NDI New Mexico as a beneficiary of your annual Golf Classic!

NURTURING is essential

Last year, as much of New Mexico shuttered due to the pandemic, so too did NDI New Mexico. The doors to the The Dance Barns and The Hiland Theater – typically gateways to dance, music, friendship, and joy – were closed and locked, and the staff endeavored to serve families in an entirely new way. The NDI New Mexico staff worked with determination and its usual creative inspiration to continue fulfilling its mission and help children and families pursue the Core Four during very uncertain times.

“



Helping curate the Selfcare newsletter was a true joy in the midst of such a strange and vulnerable time. When we didn't know what was next, being able to share moments of joy or beauty – coming straight from the incredible staff – gave us hope.”

Christiana

- NDI New Mexico Artistic Associate

At the same time, NDI New Mexico management, board of directors and other supporters understood that the staff members also needed new kinds of support that enabled them to perform their jobs under unprecedented circumstances while they also navigated the same demands and stresses as the broader NDI New Mexico family, including remote learning for children, work-from-home, and concern for the health of one's family and friends.

“Our goal in developing new support programs related to the pandemic was not only to help our staff members

continue working successfully, but to ensure we were doing everything we could as an organization to be sensitive and responsive to the many challenges they faced, whether it be feeling isolated from colleagues or navigating the new technological challenges of a work-from-home situation,” said NDI New Mexico Executive Director Russell Baker.

Among the many initiatives NDI New Mexico developed for its staff include:

- Technical support, including computer equipment, to establish personalized and effective remote work options.
- Procurement of several grants that enabled NDI New Mexico to retain staff despite pandemic-related revenue declines.
- Created opportunities for staff members to learn new skills and take on new roles, including video editing, film production and online instruction.
- Prioritized effective communication to help colleagues feel connected and supported. This included personal check-ins, regular team meetings, and incorporating live music courtesy of an NDI New Mexico pianist at the start of staff meetings.
- Established an employee newsletter providing information on pandemic-related resources, as well as photos (kids and pets!), essays and recipes staff members could share with one another.

By offering an array of services that supported staff members professionally, financially, and emotionally, NDI New Mexico helped ensure its team was more than ready to fling open the doors at The Dance Barns and The Hiland Theater and welcome its families once again.

“It has not been an easy time for anyone,” Baker said. “However, I think the strategies the team employed to lift each other's spirits, support one another and stay focused on our mission, has made us even stronger and more effective for the children and families we serve.”



GALA 2022

May 7, 2022 Santa Fe

May 14, 2022 Albuquerque

SAVE
THE
DATE!

Rollin' on the Rio!

Share the joy in person with NDI New Mexico's children!

TESS MONTOYA

from Pojoaque to NYC



Tess Montoya personifies the classic New York City story: A talented young woman from a small town (Pojoaque) gets accepted to the dance program at a prestigious university located in a big Northeastern city. From there she heads to the Big Apple to pursue a career as a professional dancer.

Unsurprisingly for those who know Tess, it only takes a few years before she lands a spot dancing for the prestigious Stephen Petronio Company, renowned for its approach to American postmodern dance.

All of this is a long way from the old "pink church" in Santa Fe, where back in the day NDI New Mexico conducted its Afterschool dance programs.

“

I was one of those kids who was there all the time. That was my spot.”

“I took dance classes after school and all day Saturday,” she says. “I was one of those kids who was there all the time. That was my spot.”

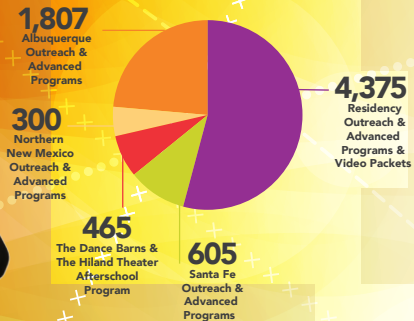
Toward the latter part of high school, she started to think seriously about applying to college as a dance major. Here too, she says, the

staff at NDI New Mexico helped show her the way. “They were very supportive and knowledgeable,” she says. “They helped with every question I had, from how to audition for college, to which schools to apply to.”

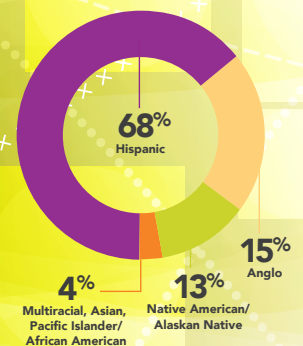
All of these lessons in life skills, combined with her dance abilities and perseverance, has enabled Tess to build a substantive career as a creative professional. She has participated in dance workshops with the Merce Cunningham Trust, and also performed in numerous dance projects in New York City. In addition to her role as Director of the Education Program with Stephen Petronio Company, she is currently the General Manager with Davalois Fearon Dance.



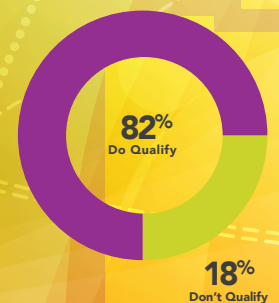
NDI NEW MEXICO CHILDREN SERVED



DEMOGRAPHICS OF NDI NEW MEXICO OUTREACH STUDENTS



NDI NEW MEXICO STUDENTS QUALIFYING FOR FEDERAL FREE OR REDUCED COST MEAL PROGRAM



This year we will serve more than 7,500 children, reach 234 public school teachers in 87 schools in 31 communities, and deliver 200,000 hours of instruction.

ALUMNI CORNER



**teaching
children
excellence**

The Dance Barns 1140 Alto Street | Santa Fe, NM 87501

The Hiland Theater 4800 Central Avenue SE | Albuquerque, NM 87108

FIRST CLASS MAIL
PRESORTED
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
ALBUQUERQUE, NM
PERMIT NO. 1100



*"Dancing with
NDI New Mexico has
changed my life!"
- NDI New Mexico Student*

WHY I LOVE teaching

Tom Porras is Director of Advanced Training for NDI New Mexico and has been part of the organization's artistic team for nearly a decade. He is an instructor for advanced students at The Hiland Theater and also is an instructor for the In-School Program both in Santa Fe and Albuquerque.

"Among the many things I love about being an instructor for NDI New Mexico is that I get to work with children who've never had much exposure to the arts. Through dance, music and other art forms, I can give them that 'Wow, what is this?!' moment. That's a very rewarding experience for me.

Another wonderful aspect of my job is seeing students grow from being little kids running around a playground at school to mature adults with careers and families of their own. I have students with whom I worked when they were in the third grade and are now out in the world training to be nurses, scientists, and teachers.

The children who participate in NDI New Mexico are our future workforce, and the ones that are going to be responsible for the world we are all going to experience in the future. If I can play even a small part in helping them become responsible, successful caretakers of our collective future, that's just an incredible motivator for me.

“

I have students with whom I worked when they were in the third grade and are now out in the world training to be nurses, scientists, and teachers.”

In general, children in New Mexico face a lot of challenges, including a chronic lack of resources and in some cases a lack of personal support. Some have never been told just how amazing and special they are. If I can be that person who for even a brief period can help them recognize they are truly wonderful, and to help them develop skills that will help them succeed in life, that's a big dose of happiness for me as well.”

