



# Ashland's Affirming Arts Studio, Inc.

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Dear Arc Families,

I apologize ahead of time for the length of this letter. I'm not one known to be few on words, especially when it's about something with which I'm passionate. ;)

Some of you may already be familiar with our studio if you had a dancer join us for some of the free Arc classes we've offered, our Ashland's Cup benefit, or even from us joining you guys for the Buddy Walk, Step Up for Autism Walk or the Arc style show. We are in our 16th year at Ashland's, and for years we have discussed ways to get more involved with our community with special needs. While we have always had a small few students with special needs join our program, it wasn't until just a couple years ago we got the ball rolling and began offering free dance workshops at our studio in conjunction with the Arc of Greater Beaumont! It has truly been a blessing, and I honestly can't tell you why we waited so long! We are now looking to expand opportunities for those with special needs in our current dance program, and we hope you choose to join us!

In the past, I've always felt it important to include all our dancers so that they feel welcomed and a part of our Ashland's Family! The only classes specifically for individuals with special needs have been the workshops we offered through the Arc. Any other time we had students interested in lessons, we would always work with them and their families to find the right classes to meet their needs so that they feel like they are with an age group close to their own, yet without feeling overwhelmed if there are physical or mental challenges that cause them to struggle some in the various classes. This has worked great for us so far, and our staff works very hard to insure each student's experience is positive and meets his or her individual needs.

That being said, it has recently been brought to my attention that there may be some individuals with special needs who feel intimidated to go into our regular dance program. To be honest, I was trying so hard to include everyone that the thought never even crossed my mind that that may keep some from trying it in the first place! A program for those 16+ is in the works, and if we have enough interest, we will begin this program this coming summer! This does not mean that dancers wishing to go into our current program can't...they are still welcome! It will just give them another option and an opportunity to take classes in a more comfortable environment with their friends. ;) It has been our experience that students younger than that don't seem to have the same reservations, so for now, we will not offer separate classes for them. We hope if they are interested, they choose to join our current program!

After attending the self advocate meeting last week and talking with everyone, we've decided to open up our Sacred/Praise Dance class to our Arc friends who are 16 or older. While they will be in class with some of our current dancers, the class setting is much different, and almost all of those currently enrolled in the class have assisted me in teaching the dance workshops we have offered. When I talked with them about this possibility, they were super excited!

Those who participate will have the opportunity to perform in our recital this coming May. That being said, there are several important pieces of information I want to share with you to help you decide if this is the right time or class for your dancer to join.

I'm also including a few names and numbers of some of the parents of our Arc friends that have joined us for dance classes or workshops. I know you may have concerns as parents that other parents that are familiar with our program might be able to respond to better. They won't be able to answer the specific questions about the classes, but they will be able to give you some insight on what their experiences with Ashland's have been thus far. ;)

We are so excited that some of you may be joining us for our weekly Praise class and look forward to seeing you soon! Please let us know if you have any further questions!

Sincerely,  
Ashley Landry-Breaux (Director/Owner)

## Praise Dance Class Important Information

\*Space will be limited, so if you are interested, please make sure to stop in our Beaumont location and register ASAP. We will begin working all together in February, so the last day to register will be Friday, January 29th. If you know for sure you want to participate, don't delay! We may cut off registration sooner if we reach the size group we feel we can best work with so that everyone feels confident in each class and come recital time!

\*This class involves exploring God moving through us, so we often pray and discuss our faith. All religions are welcomed and respected. If you have any concerns about this, please don't hesitate to talk with me. :)

\*The class will meet each Monday from 6:45-7:30 P.M. at the Beaumont studio. You will receive a studio calendar with information regarding holidays, etc. when you register. I recently found out this overlaps bowling night, but I'm hopeful this gives some of the other members of our Arc family the opportunity to try something new and get active until we can set a better time for the upcoming summer and fall schedules.

\*The total cost to participate will be \$200. This includes the actual cost of the class, participating in recital, and a special shirt to wear for the actual performance. Normally that price would only cover the tuition for the four months and wouldn't cover registration, recital and costume fees. I'm hoping by offering this special price, more will be able to take advantage of this opportunity. You may pay the amount in full or divide the amount into four \$50 payments: the initial date you register, February 20th, March 20th and April 20th. If you need to make different payment arrangements, please talk to me personally. If you are unable to pay this amount and would like to participate, please talk with Caitlin or Teri through the Arc. We do have some financial aide available, and if there is a need, they will help me determine how to distribute it. We don't want anyone to not be able to participate due to expense; however, there will be more expense involved on our end, so we are trying to cover our cost. The workshops we offer 3-4 times a year as special opportunities will remain free!

\*The dancers can simply come in comfortable clothes for class and bare feet! I will probably have them dance barefoot for recital, too, so this will work great! Soft t-shirts, sweat pants, yoga pants, etc. are all great options for our Monday classes! If they want to wear dance clothes, that's great, too! We have some things at the studio, and our office staff would be happy to assist you find the right fit!

Parent/Guardian References (They may or may not be participating in this class, but they all have been or are currently involved with our studio.)

Nancy Dinger (Bethany & Leah): 409-792-9541 or 409-548-2590

Maureen Gorsich (Kenneth): 409-860-3784 or 409-201-6207

Paula Pratt (Allison): 409-658-5080

Bennette Teer (Stefanie): 409-658-2173

Janice Watkins (James): 409-651-1162 or 409-898-4559