

Teaching Artist Spotlight: Donna Boyle

October 2020...In 2007, one of Donna Boyle's friends, who happened to be the principal at John Hancock Demonstration School in Philadelphia, told her about a new program that was starting up: Dancing Classrooms Philly (DCP). John Hancock was one of the first schools to offer DCP, and Donna decided to audition to be a teaching artist. Thirteen years later, Donna has reached thousands of students throughout her DCP career.



Donna is the Founder of Disco America Dance Championships, was the regional dance champion on the national TV show "Dance Fever," and has won many other dance competition awards. She has also taught dance for more than 20 years at locations around the Delaware Valley including the Plymouth Meeting Mall and Universal DanceSport Center in Collingswood, NJ.

Donna first became interested in dance as a child, watching her brothers and sisters dance. Her favorite dance styles are the hustle, west coast swing, rhumba, and cha-cha. In addition to dance, Donna enjoys her work with children, which began when she started a company that provided entertainment for children's parties such as balloon making, face painting, and characters. "My love of working with children carried into when I became a DCP teaching artist," Donna said. "I enjoy the things they say, how they react to dance, and the fun they have with it."

For those times when a DCP student might be reticent at first to participate, Donna remains positive, and encourages them to continue. "I like making an impact on their life. It's rewarding when they start out not knowing any of the dances, and by the end of the residency they are confident, happy, and successful. They are able to do the steps and sometimes have surprised themselves that they got through it," said Donna. Her encouragement of students to participate also makes a difference in their outlook. "Sometimes if you call on a student who might not want to participate, they actually become more interested in the program because you paid attention to them," Donna said. "They feel more accomplished and this can sometimes turn things around."

One of Donna's fondest memories as a DCP teaching artist was when she received a letter from a student that read "Thank you for making me a gentleman."

In addition to serving as a teaching artist, Donna has also been a DCP Education Liaison for 10 years. As an Education Liaison she visits classrooms to make sure the curriculum is being followed properly and to encourage the students. "The kids really like having a guest teacher in with them. We tell the students how great they are and give them positive reinforcement."

This year, most of the Dancing Classrooms Philly program will be virtual due to COVID-19 and continued school closures. However, Donna feels prepared to teach virtually after attending a 2-day training session over the summer led by Dancing Classrooms Global. "It's scary at first because it's a whole new thing, but once we get used to it, it will be just like teaching in person," Donna said.

If your school would like to offer a Virtual Residency, [click here](#) for more information.

By Talia Yellin Fisher