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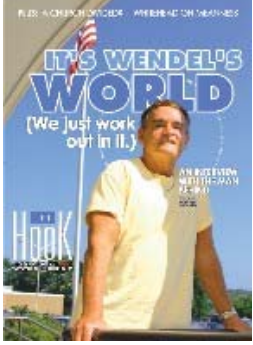
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FACETIME- Dancing by Hart: Ballet pro offers expertise

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If Vince Lombardi and Shari Lewis ever had a daughter, she might have grown up to be something like Sally Hart.

To watch the 50-year-old ballet instructor teaching her young students is not unlike watching a football practice. She leads her class in preparatory stretches, she goads the children to fight through the pain, and she threatens to levy a fine if they don't do the exercises properly.

However, Hart's in-class persona is far from the blustery bravado of a typical football coach. It turns out the fine is a single shiny penny. And her unfettered enthusiasm, constant animation, and motherly compassion come through in every hushed whisper and playful bellow. Indeed, Hart's teaching is a show itself, and it's one on which the curtain just rose with the opening of her summer program.

The evident passion with which she instructs has powered Hart through a lifetime of dance, including a five- year stint with the prestigious Joffrey Ballet. However, it wasn't until she got to the Charlottesville area that her teaching career began.

Hart had put her daughter Veronica in a local ballet class on a doctor's advice to correct her inwardly turned feet. "I saw the class,

and I was horrified," recalls Hart. "So I pulled her out, and people said, 'Well, you're more qualified. Why don't you teach her?' And then there were more and more parents who were saying, 'Teach my kid!'"

Fourteen years later, parents of 60 more kids are asking for Hart's services. In February, she and her husband, Gary, opened the Albemarle Ballet Theatre in Crozet. Constructed over less than 100 days in what used to be a fruit packing shed, the facility is now home to classes in ballet, jazz, and theater.

For most of her students, Hart's lessons are a new and exciting part of their lives, but even for those who have watched her teach for years, it's still a sight to behold. Says husband Gary, "I love watching her. She just has such an incredible effect on any of her students-- it doesn't matter what age. It's very powerful."

Now with eight students enrolled in their "Dancing in the Streets" scholarship program, typically expensive ballet training is open not only to all ages, but to all economic classes as well.

"Kids in August with latchkeys, what do they do? This is a wonderful place to come to see what dance entails," Hart says. "I want to take this local talent, these kids who are here in this area, so they realize there's more out there."

To hear her say it, it seems that after spending decades "out there," Hart would like nothing more than teaching the students she has right here.





Sally Hart
PHOTO BY JEN FARIELLO

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