

# MoCo students show actress-dancer their moves

By Xander Landen Sentinel Staff Jun 20, 2017 (0)



Jenna Dewan Tatum, host of NBC's "World of Dance" and star of "Step Up", stops by MoCo Arts in Keene for a Q&A session with young performers. Some impromptu dancing followed the talk.

Courtesy

Dewan Tatum, host of the NBC dance competition show "World of Dance," stopped by MoCo Arts as part of a visit to the Granite State for a cousin's wedding near Squam Lake over the weekend.

She hosted a Q&A session with the students before participating in an impromptu dance session with them.

"It's always inspiring to actually speak directly to dancers and performers," she told The Sentinel.

Dewan Tatum — who has starred in more than a dozen films, including the blockbuster dance movie "Step Up" (2006), and is married to dancer and actor Channing Tatum — also has family in the region.

Sullivan residents Jean and John Hoffman, who are on MoCo's Capital Campaign Committee, are Dewan Tatum's great-aunt and uncle.

"We're so proud of MoCo that we wanted (Dewan Tatum) to see what we have going on here," Jean Hoffman said.

MoCo Arts is a nonprofit organization that provides arts education to children ranging from 18 months to 18 years old, and serves more than 2,300 kids a year. MoCo Arts offers dance programs, in styles such as ballet, tap and hip-hop, as well as a variety of theater programs.

Beth Brown, MoCo's development director, said Jean Hoffman arranged for Dewan Tatum to visit the studio in part to drum up publicity for the organization's fundraising campaign for a new building at 38 Roxbury St.

MoCo is on Railroad Street in a 7,700-square-foot building. It will have significantly more space in its new home: 17,000 square feet, to be more precise, with two stories, three full studios, a dedicated 200-seat black box theater, parking, office space and a lobby. The site is where the former Keene Family YMCA building stood before it was razed.

As of Monday morning, MoCo had raised \$4.37 million of its \$5 million goal for the project, according to Brown. The public phase of fundraising began earlier this month.

In her visit with MoCo students Monday, Dewan Tatum was peppered with questions about her inspirations and how she broke into the industry.

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After dancing throughout her childhood, Dewan Tatum moved to L.A. as a young woman and auditioned for many roles.

Before finding success, she faced about 10 months of rejection, she said. Rejection, she stressed, is a reality of the performing arts world.

"There were so many opportunities I didn't get," she told the group. "If you really love it, you've got to stick with it and keep going,"

She eventually went on to dance for artists including Janet Jackson and NSYNC.

Years into her career, a manager discovered her and encouraged her to also find work as an actress, she said.



Dewan Tatum, 36, reflected on when she was the same age as many of the students in the room.

Dewan Tatum said she grew up in different parts of the country, but spent a lot of time in the small city of Colleyville, Texas. In her teenage years, she prioritized dancing over much of her social life.

"I would do my homework on my lap on the way to dance and on the way back," she said.

She pointed to her work in her early years as key to her success.

"No one's going to hand you opportunities," she said. "You really have to believe in yourself and have the training to back it up."

MoCo student Erin Meiklejohn, 13, of Peterborough said she's a big fan of Dewan Tatum's.

"It was really nice to see someone who has gone so far in life," she said Monday.

Meiklejohn said she found Dewan Tatum inspiring and added that she's considering pursuing a career in the performing arts.

"Hearing her story makes me feel like I can."

Actress and dancer Jenna Dewan Tatum, front left, and MoCo Arts instructor Cassie Tobey lead a crew of young dancers Monday.