

ABEC'S SMALL BUSINESS REVIEW

"CELEBRATING LOCAL BUSINESS OWNERS"

Inspire Dance Company, Dena Monroe

By Barbara L. Roose

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Inspire Dance Company owner and artistic director, Dena Monroe chose the name of her business on the night her beloved Aunt Val passed away from breast cancer. "My Aunt Val was never able to have children on her own," remembers Dena, "So, she treated me like her daughter. She had a huge impact on my life – she made me into a strong woman."

A few months before her aunt's death, Dena had made the decision to leave her dream job as a competition director in Phoenix, Arizona in order to stay by her aunt's side. "It was my dream job, but I had to come back because she meant so much to me...Even when she was going through chemotherapy and radiation - Aunt Val was strong. She told me, 'Whatever God's will is God's will.'"

In the moments after her aunt passed away, Dena says her life's mission crystallized: "Right then I knew that life was too short and that I could change the world if I could have an impact on just one child, like the kind of impact Aunt Val had on me. I named my studio 'Inspire Dance Company' because my Aunt Val inspired me. She loved children, dancing and music. Her legacy will live on through the children here."

An Oregon native, Dena began dancing at three years old. At 10 years old, Dena was a teaching assistant under her mentor, Kelly Melanowski, at Dance Concepts. After graduating from Clay High School in 2000, Dena went to Ohio University where she was one of the first freshmen in school history to make the university's dance team. "I remember praying, 'God, if you let me make this dance team, then I know I am supposed to be a dancer for the rest of my life.'" After a year at OU, Dena came home and enrolled at the University of Toledo and went to Walt Disney World for a business internship in 2001. Over the next four years, Dena would dance for both Disney and Universal Studios and have the opportunity to work with many well-known celebrities.